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August 8, 1882.

Vol. XI.

Single
Number.

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY BEADLE AND ADAMS,
No. 38 WILLIAM STREET, NEW YORK.

Price,
5 Cents.

No. 263.

DEADWOOD DICK'S DIVIDE; or, THE SPIRIT OF SWAMP LAKE.

BY EDWARD L. WHEELER,

AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK" NOVELS, "ROSEBUD ROB" NOVELS, "GILT-EDGED DICK," "BONANZA BILL," ETC., ETC.



"DURN MY OLD CATS IF YOU AIN'T A QUEER 'UN!" HE REMARKED, PAUSING TO SQUINT AT CALAMITY JANE.

Deadwood Dick's Divide;

OR,

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CHAPTER I

SWAMP LAKE.

A SUMMER sunset had just died out, leaving the gloaming creeping over the earth.

At Doomsday's Ferry, the frogs croaked noisily in the swamp that bordered the edges of the sheet of water and gave to it its name—Swamp Lake.

A queer place it was, just like which few other places existed, and it had a history, too.

Nestling down in the rugged mountainous region, where the bluffs of four ranges towered above like grim monarchs, and reflected their tree-crowned tops in the water, the lake was one purporting to hold many secrets.

It was by crossing this lake that parties who desired to push through the mountains in either direction, saved a roundabout trip of many miles' distance, as well as much over-mountain travel.

By ferrying over Swamp Lake, they were enabled to follow on through the pass without much trouble.

Hence had an enterprising mountaineer, named Dan Doomsday, built a huge raft, by the aid of which he could transport vehicles and passengers from one shore to another.

At a dollar a head, therefore, Dan the first year earned enough to build a more pretentious flat-boat, for the accommodation of his patrons.

The distance across the lake was not over three-quarters of a mile, and only the straight route across it was navigable for a large boat, fully two-thirds of the lake being swampy and heavily wooded.

Far back into the mountains ran this timbered tract of water, and many were the wild stories told of the experience of those who had attempted to explore the gloomy branch-shaded watery corridors—fabulous yarns, for the most part, which no one credited.

At the water's edge, on the eastern side of the mountain-looked basin, Old Dan had built him a cabin; while in the immediate vicinity was another habitation, over the door of which was the sign:

"JACOB SOLOMONS,

HOTEL, SALOON, GROCERY, POST-OFFICE, &C."

Solomons was a Jew of a speculative turn of mind, and located at the Ferry, anticipating that some day a young city would spring up there, and he would be prepared to reap a harvest.

He and Old Dan were the only inhabitants of the embryo settlement, and, therefore, hated each other cordially, neither ever speaking unless it was a business necessity.

The evening alluded to was a balmy one, and Dan and Jacob sat upon their respective door-steps glaring meditatively at each other, while they puffed silently away at their pipes.

The day had passed without bringing a single customer to the Ferry, consequently not a penny to the pockets of either Jacob or Daniel, which was something strange, as travel was generally brisk on account of new discoveries of gold in the hills.

But the monotony was not to be left unbroken. When the shadows were beginning to grow thick over and about the water, a heavy vehicle of the "prairie schooner" order, drawn by four spanking mules, came through the gap to the Ferry, as if in a hurry.

On the front seat of the wagon a young woman was acting in the capacity of driver, and seemed to understand how to handle the reins perfectly well.

Old Dan Doomsday, who counted himself a judge of human good and bad looks, at once set the fair Jehu down as a "reg'lar stunner" for beauty.

In truth she was pretty, and Dan rose from his seat as he tipped his hat, to which Solomons, across the way, responded with a grunt of contempt and envy.

The fair driver was apparently about eighteen years of age, with a gracefully rounded figure and a face which glowed with the rose-tint of perfect health.

Her mouth was coquettishly pretty; her eyes sparkled with spirit; her hair, which fell in a

wavy shower over her shoulders, was of a nut-brown color.

She was plainly yet neatly dressed in a suit of dark gray, and wore a sort of straw sombrero upon her head.

"Evenin' tew ye, miss!" accosted Dan Doomsday, as he tipped his slouch and well-worn felt hat. "Got hyar a leetle too late for the ferry, I see."

"Is that so? Can we not get over the lake to-night?" the girl asked, her face showing her anxiety and disappointment.

"Reckon not, mum. Jest turned in fer the night, ye see, an' it's too dark to get across now. Hev to wait till ter-morrer, sure pop! Take ye over ther first thing in the mornin', but ye see et ain't safe on them aire waters at night, I tell ye!"

"Not safe? Why not? Have you pirates on such a sheet?" the girl demanded.

"Yas. Yeou jest whacked the nail on the head then, you bet! This hyar ragin' sheet has got pirates; an' arter ye put out yer hosses I kin oblige ye wi' a full description o' the hull affair. Got any one with ye?"

"Of course—my mother, who is sick!" the girl replied. "We are on our way to the Herndon mines to join my father. Our name is Laurel—my name is Kate. We would very much like to cross over and continue our journey to-night, sir!"

"Yas, I presume so, but ye see no amount o' money could induce me to shove ther ferry out at this hour. Et's a ticklish feelin' I have around my spine even at day. So I reckon you'll hev ter accept 'commodations at my howtel ter-night, where ye kin get a good square meal."

"Dot ish ons meestake, mine dear shild!" shouted Solomons, who, from his doorway, had been anxiously listening to the conversation. "Dot veller ish von liar, und he sheat you mit your monish oud. He haff noddink to eat but deadt buzzard; but I haff de ferry pest in der market. You vant to sdop at der first glass hotel—"

"Shet up, you sneak of a Jew!" roared Doomsday. "Ef ye don't, I'll waltz over thar an' cram you down your own throat; ye miserable pork-stealer!"

"Yankee! Yankee!" flung back Solomons. "You vash no goot. You is a pork-tief und a plackleg every dimes!"

With a roar, Dan started toward the saloon, but with a taunting laugh the Jew darted inside, and slammed the door shut.

"Oh! if I ever catch that Dutch thief, I'll mutilate him!" the ferryman muttered, as he returned and helped Kate to unhitch the mules.

When they were picketed out to graze, Mrs. Laurel was assisted from the wagon into the cabin.

She was a middle-aged woman, who showed traces of former beauty, but was now pale and emaciated from long suffering with consumption.

After she was comfortably arranged upon a couch of skins, in the cabin, Old Doomsday proceeded to get supper, in the primitive fashion of the frontier, and soon had a relishable repast of roast bear-meat, "hard-tack" and coffee set before his guests, to which they did justice.

"Yas," Dan went on to say, as he cleared away the cooking utensils, "I've been keepin' things a-joggin' heer now fer two year an' over, an' I've hed a pile o' ther ladies relish my cookin', but ye! Thet Jew over thar occasionally ketches onto some, but they get sick of livin' on forks an' spoons. An', as fer not takin' ye across the lake, I'll tell ye. It's ha'nted!"

"Haunted!" Miss Kate Laurel exclaimed, contemptuously. "Oh! fudge!"

"No fudge erbout it, I tell ye! It's ha'nted jest as sure as my name is Old Dan Doomsday—not ha'nted wi' superstitious imaginations, but wi' genuine bony-fide ghosts."

Kate laughed heartily at the idea, while Mrs. Laurel turned pale with apprehension.

"Well, now, I'd just like to see a real ghost, I would!" the girl declared. "I ain't a bit of a coward, and I just love any thing romantic like ghosts and the like."

"Bet ye ye wouldn't say that, ef ye war ter git skeered by one o' the infernal critters once!" Dan protested, with earnestness. "But I'll tell ye the story an' then you'll see fer yourself that thar's somethin' curious about the matter. Did ye ever hearn tell of the chap w'at used ter be so much talked about, up nor-west, an' who called hisself Deadwood Dick?"

Kate Laurel uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"Why, indeed, I have!" she replied. "I've

read much of his daring acts, and have sometimes almost fancied myself in love with him," and she laughed merrily.

"Humph!" and Old Doomsday shrugged his shoulders. "Ye must be a queer piece, ef that's yer taste. Why, most gals faint at mention of his name. But, heer's ther story, sech as it is, an' I hope ye won't hev ther night-hosa, through heerin' it:"

"Waal, I s'pose you've hearn tell ther pranks, or many of 'em, what thet aire dare-devil cut up, but hyar's ther latest. Et war jest about a year ago, that he come hyar to my ferry, one night like you kim to-night, an' wanted me ter tote him over. I'd just tied up, an' told him I couldn't shove out again till mornin', nobow, at which he got narvous, and offered me a big pile o' rocks ter put him on t'other side, but I couldn't see ther p'int."

"Ye see, once on a time, up in ther hills, the galoot cleaned out a stage I war on, an' tuk every cent I had, but tho' I remembered him and made up my mind to not favor him, he knew nothin' of me."

"Waal, seein' he couldn't git across, he concluded to wait till mornin', tho' I could see that he war as nervous as a hen on a hot grid-dle, an' evidently expectin' some one."

"He had a hoss with him, packed up as ef he war goin' on a long journey, and he picketed that cluss ter ther shore, as if he war anxious ter be off, ther fust thing in the morning."

"I tried ter query out what ther difickelty was, but it warn't no use; he was as mum as a mice. I reckoned thar was somethin' the rum-pus—mebbe officers after him—an' resolved not to help him off, till mornin' nobow."

"And about ten o' clock, when ther moon war jest peepin' over ther range, an' we war settin' out o' doors, nigh to the boat, we heard ther clatter o' horses' f-et, an' Deadwood Dick sprung to his feet, excitedly."

"It's just as I expected," he cried, "the devils aire after me. I'll give you a thousand dollars, old man, to get me over that lake."

"I shook my head, and told him I warn't goin' ter get myself inter trouble."

"Then may the curse of Deadwood Dick rest upon you and this place forever," he cried, fiercely. "Do you see that horse? Upon it is a hundred thousand dollars in gold. The man who heads the wolves you hear approaching, was my partner in a big find. A week ago we finished our work, and made a division. Not content with his own share, the rascal would take my part of the divide from me, assisted as he is by a pack of human wolves. Before he shall do that, I will sink the divide in the middle of yon lake, and haunt every person who thereafter crosses the water by night!"

"Jeminy! but thet ar' feller war in dead earnest, too. He hit me a sudden soaker in the bazzoo, that nearly stood me on my head, an' leapin' onto ther horse, he spurred it straight inter ther lake!"

The old man stopped then, and stroked his grizzly beard a moment at the same time nodding his head, grimly.

"What then?" Kate asked, with apparent interest.

"Waal, ye might know!" Doomsday said. "No man could ever swim across that lake on hoss-back, an' durned few kin do it alone, wi' their togs on, you bet! Waal, inter ther lake went Deadwood Dick an' his hoss, an' ye can bet ther animile swum beautiful till it got nigh about half-way across; then hoss an' rider went down. Since then—"

He looked at a clock on the mantle, and then arose and went to the window.

"Come here!" he gasped, a minute later.

Kate Laurel arose and approached the window, and her gaze followed the course indicated by Doomsday's finger.

Out upon the lake the moonlight was falling with brilliant radiance, giving a rather spectral effect to every object upon which it rested.

Near the center of the lake opposite the ferry, a small canoe drifted; standing upright in it was a man whose figure was clad in a flowing robe of white—a man with long hair and mustache, but whose eyes were closed and whose face was nearly as white as the robes wrapt about him.

CHAPTER II.

A YEAR LATER.

JUST one year later—summer again made fragrant and balmy the breezes, and added rich green to all the grass, trees and shrubs that lined the mountain side.

A year is a long lapse of time, when considered by days and hours, and often brings many changes in places and events.

Let's look down on Doomsday Ferry.

It appears strangely unlike the place of a year ago, for the eastern shore of the lake is now dotted with many new shanties, and the bustle of activity is seen and heard everywhere.

Dan Doomsday sits complacently on the end of his ferry barge, as it is drawn up by the beach, and smokes his grimy pipe with evident satisfaction as he surveys the busy scene around him.

"Yes, thar's a big change since a year ago; since that night Kate Laurel come heer with her mammy, an' liked ther place so well that she concluded to locate right heer. Then, jest as soon as 'twar found that a pretty woman war settled heer, ther popylation flocked in, fast and sartin."

The old ferryman fell into a fit of musing, his chin dropping upon his hands.

Not long his reverie remained unbroken, however, for there came a musical laugh, and a hand patted the bald spot upon his head.

Looking up, he beheld Kate Laurel, looking not a bit older than she had a year ago, and if anything, more decidedly piquant and pretty, in an airy bunting dress and straw hat.

"Why, Uncle Dan, you'll get sunstruck and tanned, sitting here in the sun," she said, merrily. "I do declare you're getting fat and lazy since we first came here."

"All jest because your pert self has bin about ter cheer me out o' the blues, I expect," Dan chuckled. "I've jest been cogitatin' on how ther town's growed, child, sence ye furst cum hyar. S'pect ef another impertation o' wimmen was ter come thar'd be a reg'lar city heer in no time."

"The place has grown, surely, but not as I could have wished. There are a good many bold, bad men here lately, whom I both fear and detest. If it wasn't for one thing—one vain, foolish whim, as mamma calls it, we would move on into the interior mines, where papa is, or was when last heard from."

"Oh! ye mean consarnin' the speerit o' Swamp Lake, eh?" Dan queried.

"Yes, Deadwood Dick," Kate replied. "I shall never leave this place until it is settled for a certainty whether that apparition we frequently see, is really alive or supernatural."

"Pshaw! girl, you're crazy. Haven't I seen it these last three years, an' orten't I know it's a spook? Lord a'mighty, Kit Laurel, what d'ye want to do wi' sech a thing as spooks?"

"Tisn't the spooks I'm after," Kate replied. "I'm after Deadwood Dick himself, for a reason best known to myself. That he is not dead, I have considerable faith."

"Waal, durned ef I wouldn't like to know what ye want of him. Queer sort of a man fer a purty gal like you to git stuck on."

Kate laughed.

"You have got the wrong idea of the matter," she replied. "I am by no means stuck, as you choose to express it, after any man. I am not a girl who falls in love with a shadow. Why I want to test this mystery but I and the one above me knows."

"I heer thet new pilgrim, Wild Walt, proposes to search for Deadwood Dick's divide, w'at's buried down in the lake."

"So I am informed," Kate responded. "He is the essence of all that is vile. He even had the audacity to address me with familiarity, last evening, as I was going to the post-office, but I guess my look apprised him he had better be less familiar. Do you know what I believe?"

"No."

"Well, it is this: this man Wild Walt seems to have a deal of power among the majority of the men, and it is not impossible that he was one of the men who chased Deadwood Dick to Swamp Lake—may even have been the pard of the latter. If so, his influence would go to show that he has many cronies here, and they propose not only to search for and appropriate Dick's part, but also to pry into the secret of the ghost business, to learn for sure what there is in it. They may suspect, as I do, that there is a further object of the specter's guarding the lake than the simple scheme of frightening people from raising the sunken treasure."

"Git eout! In the name of goodness, what other object could there be? Thar's nothin' else to guard, except the frogs, pollywogs, and so forth."

"You don't know for certain. This Swamp Lake may have secrets that are not known to you, for I've heard you say that you never knew it to be explored far into the timber. There might be an island with a gold mine on it, for all you know. This very Deadwood

Dick is the man to run onto such streaks of luck, and knows how to keep mum, too."

Old Dan whistled his surprise.

"You're a keen one," he muttered, as he scratched upon his bald spot in a fruitless search for the hirsutes. "I hadn't tho't o' that afore; but thar's a possibility thar may be sumthin' in it."

"And that's one thing I mean to find out!" Kate declared, as she turned and walked away, on seeing a party of men approaching.

The Ferry had indeed undergone a change.

While Old Dan had different ideas on the matter, it is likely that the main cause of the influx was owing to the fact that gold had been discovered in small but paying quantities in the vicinity.

Then, too, being on the route to the interior mines helped to add to the camp's population.

Jakey Solomons had not struck it so badly, after all, for being the first to start, he was the first to profit, and his saloon and general store had to be enlarged to accommodate his business, as it was the principal place for liquid refreshments, Dan Doomsday having abandoned the hotel business.

Jakey was a shrewd fellow, although he did not make many friends, and always tried to create some sort of sport, if it was in no other way than to climb on his bar and sing and orate.

The evening after Kate Laurel's conversation with old Dan, the saloon was well patronized by miners and men-about-town, who drank and discussed the topics of the day with great gusto, the liquid fire in most instances adding to their volubility.

Among the crowd, the man who seemed to be a sort of leader and more looked up to than others, was a tall, burly rough of perhaps thirty years, who was rather prepossessing of countenance, having a graceful mustache and goatee, and a good complexion.

His eyes, however, emitted a dark, peering glance that was treacherous.

Dressed in top-boots, light pants and vest, dark coat, "b'iled" shirt and collar, and white sombrero, his appearance was of the "nobby" order that characterizes the Western sport and adventurer who plies his vocation principally in mining towns, and the saloons and streets there-of.

This fellow was addressed as Wild Walt, and he not unfrequently boasted of himself as "The Tiger."

Whether this title was applicable to his nature, or not, is hard to say; but his deportment often seemed to indicate such a fact.

Among others who were particularly noticeable about the apartment, was a man whose appearance was decidedly curious.

His attire was ragged and dirty in the extreme, consisting simply of stogy boots, corduroy breeches, a striped shirt made of ticking, and a plug hat cocked upon one side of his head, which looked as though it had seen hard service ever since the days of Noah's ark.

But, queerest of all was his countenance, and something entirely out of the usual line, as far as Doomsday Ferry was concerned.

Of his face, from the neck upward, absolutely nothing could be seen except his nose and eyes.

Whiskers and mustache covered his countenance to the very eyes, while down over his forehead to the eyebrows, his hair was combed in "bang" fashion.

All this was exceedingly strange, but the most curious part of his appearance was that there was a division in the color of his hair and beard.

The division ran up through the middle of the face, and over the head. One side was of a reddish color—the other was as white as driven snow, and both sides of the hair and beard were full and luxuriant.

The eyes of this man were as keen and brilliant as those of a person of much younger appearance; but his nose was a synonym of all that appertains to Bacchus.

This member was exceedingly large, and beginning at the end with a glossy red color, gradually tapered down to a gentle pink shade, at the roots.

What of the mouth was revealed under the two-colored mustache, was rather waggish in expression, as was the glitter of the eyes.

The only first-class appurtenance visible about this striking individual, was a revolver and knife in his belt, and a fine-looking parrot which he usually carried perched upon his shoulder.

A most pert looking bird it was, which had an eye for everything worth noticing, and had something shrewd to say, talking with marvel-

ous accuracy, and seeming to possess almost human intelligence.

Of course the strange pair were a source of great attraction from the moment they entered the saloon; and when the man of two colors ranged himself up along the bar, plenty others dropped to the conclusion that it was about time for them to "take su'thin'" too.

"Whisk!" the curiosity gasped, as he shoved his manly breast against the bar; "an' ef ye happen to get a bumble-bee or bull-thistle in it, to make et tickle when it goes down, I sha'n't be angry."

"I reckon you'll find fire enough in this beverage, my friend," the bar keeper said, as he poured out a glass of the article sold for whisky. "It has been known to burn a hole through chilled steel."

"Good! Thet's jest ther article I've been lookin' for!" the stranger averred, and indulged the drink with gusto. "I've got a tank, my pestiferous pilgrim, w'ot kin hold fluid lightnin' jest like a trick in eucher."

"Hello! What hev ye got heer?" Wild Walt demanded, striding up. "This must be an escaped animal from Barnum's menagerie. I say, old man, when did you escape from the ark?"

"Shortly after you were bounced out for making love to the monkey," the veteran replied, a cute twinkle in his eye, at the same time motioning for another decoction of "bug-juice." "Ef ye remember antediluvian times, ye'll recollect me as being the man who caught ye stealin' poultry from ther ark an' smugglin' et out to the sinners w'at war roostin' in the tree-tops."

The crowd smiled audibly, while Wild Walt uttered a snarl of disapproval.

"You're mighty smart, ain't ye!" he growled. "Must have been swallowing a razor factory."

"No—not so bad as that, tho' I did chew up a needle factory an' swallow a thorn tree a bit ago. 'Twon't do any man harm to gulp down a grass scythe or two now an' then, judgin' by yourself."

"Well, now, jest ye look out that you don't git too flit hyarabouts, or you'll git suppressed, suddenly. I'm ruther bad, myself."

"Ye luk it. I war jest goin' to observe the same," the stranger averred, with a nod. "A purty peach like you orter go to ther sea-shore an' git ther salt breeze to keep from sp'illin' ontirely. Ef ye think ye kin pick on me, because I'm beautiful, ye'll find I'm allus tew hum. No keerds!"

"Cuss my boots, if your impudence don't grow worse and worsel!" Wild Walt snarled.

"What's yer species of the brute creation anyhow, and what d'ye want hyar, at the Ferry?"

"Waal, I ken't see as it's any o' yer bizness, but still I'll tell ye. I'm a downright bright winged butterfly from Bosting, variegated an' beautiful wi' ther aesthetic taste of a Wilde, and the pugilistic propensities of a Sullivan. When ye cum down ter names, I've one w'ot freezes the fried cake, ter speak figuratively. Bum—that's my handle—Bum—Dionysius Diablo Deliberate Bum. No cards. Fer short ye kin call me Old Bum, 'case ther name suits."

"I'm gettin' old an' feeble,

I cannot drink much more;

My skull absorbs the sunshine and the rain,

And—"

"There! that's a great plenty!" Wild Walt declared, gruffly. "Shet up yer vocabulary machine, or I'll throw you out of the window into the street."

Bum whistled, and scratched his ruddy nose.

"What war that?" he demanded. "Did ye say sumthin' jest then, or war I dreamin'? Did you unblushingly hint that ye would project me through the windy, ef I didn't quit?"

"Exactly! Give me three inches more o' yer lip, an' I'll make the other side of yer mug turn white quicker than a cat kin say catsup."

Old Bum stared at the man a moment, incredulously, then, giving vent to a roar more inhuman than otherwise, he rushed toward the Sport, his aspect something terrible.

CHAPTER III.

OLD BUM'S PRETTY PARD.

It looked very much as though the Sport, Wild Walt, was doomed to speedy annihilation, when the bullwhacker, Old Bum, rushed forward with vengeful mien.

But, the Tiger was by no means a weak man, and did not dodge to avoid his assailant; on the contrary he met him half-way and endeavored to get a blow in between Bum's eyes.

"No ye don't, me larkie!" that worthy cried, as he neatly parried, and tapped the Tiger on the chin with sufficient force to make his teeth

chatter. "I see what you're arter. You want discolored my party proboscis—but ye can't cum it—no sir-ee, bobtail wassup! If ther old man's ever tew home, it's generally about this time o' day. Fer instance, *thus!*"

And with a quick feint he put Wild Walt off his guard, and followed by planting a blow between his eyes which unceremoniously tumbled him to the floor.

"Thar! Now jist toss out another consignment of that aire liquid lightnin', an' then I'll be ready to clean out the crowd, if needs be!" Old Bum cried, ranging himself up alongside the bar. "I'm dry, I am; too much monotony."

"Py shimminy gracious, uff dot veller Walt don'd make you hump, I shall pe mooch mus-daken!" Solomons prophesied. "He was von slasher."

"And I'm a masher!" was Bum's retort. "Boys, will ye have somethin'—at yer own expense?"

The crowd stepped forward, to a man, but when they heard the conclusion of the invitation, a blank expression came over their faces.

"See heer, old gull, you're too cute," one miner growled. "First ye know you'll git dumped inter yer three by seven."

"Whar is the old devil!" Wild Walt roared, staggering to his feet, half blinded by the effects of the blows he had received. "Oh! I see him now!"

He quickly drew a revolver from his belt, and fired at Bum, but so little deliberation was there in his aim that the bullet did no harm, at all.

The next instant Bum wheeled and leaped once more upon the Tiger, the momentum of his lunge carrying them both to the floor.

But, Bum was on top, and the next instant his right hand clutched Wild Walt's two wrists in an iron gripe, and his left hand caught the Sport by the throat.

"Curses on you, let me up!" Wild Walt howled, gaspingly, as he made vain attempts to get free.

"Never, until we settle this hyar leetle matter, right where she am," Bum replied, decidedly, and at the same time increasing his gripe on the Sport's throat. "I want ye ter understand, my hirsute hairpin, thet I didn't cum hyar ter be run on, an' ye might jist as well knuckle under now as any time."

"Cuss ye, let me up! I'll show ye how Wild Walt knuckles under!"

"Never!" Bum returned, firmly. "Ef ye don't ax my parding, and promise to never raise yer hand ag'in' me ag'in', I'm goin' ter shet off yer wind jist like as best I knows how."

"Choke, be cursed! I'll not apologize ner nothin'. I ain't no tenderfoot."

"Not a bit!" and Bum increased his gripe until the Tiger grew livid in countenance; then relaxing the clasp a little. "How d'ye like that fer instance. Did ye feel flighty?"

"Cuss ye, let up! This fooling isn't what it's cracked up to be. Let me go, or I'll give ye a pointer, when I do get up!"

"Ye can't git up, tho'," and Bum chuckled, grimly. "I've got ye right whar ye can't budge except I say move! You've either got ter cum tew time, or by my beauty I'll send ye up ther golden stairs two steps at a lick. Let me tell ye—I'm Bum, from Bumtown, and I'm very bum when ye r'ile me. I came heer ter Dooomsday, ter propogate a peculiar errand, an' ef I know myself I ain't a-goin' ter back out. So, fer ther last time, ef ye say ye'll mind yer business, an' not try t'er-mind mine, I'll let ye up; otherwise I'll foreclose my mortgage on your gullet in short order. Business! Speak quick, or off you go!"

A dead silence reigned for the next minute.

Wild Walt's face was white and livid by turns, according as the grasp upon his throat increased or relaxed, and there was a gleam of desperation in his eyes.

The bystanders stood grim and speechless, but made no effort to help the Sport.

"Come!" Bum called a moment later. "One, two—"

"I cave!" Wild Walt gasped, a tremor of fear passing over him. "I acknowledge that you've got it your own way, an' I cave. Let me up, an' I'll guarantee to let ye alone."

Bum looked at the man searchingly for a moment, then allowed him to rise.

"I want ye to lookee hyar," he said, as soon as Wild Walt regained his feet. "I've let ye up at yer own acceptance of my terms, an' I reckon you have man enough about you to stick to your word."

"If I don't you'll no doubt awaken to the fact," the Tiger replied, striding to the bar and ordering whiskey.

"Bad luck to you if I do," Old Bum growled. "Ef ye know when you're well off you'll keep yer distance from this hyar earthquake."

Whether the Tiger really believed this or not remains to be seen; but the expression upon his face was anything but good-natured.

The man from Bumtown was quite the hero of the hour among the rougher class of miners.

After hanging around the saloon for awhile longer, evidently to see if any one was disposed to "amuse" him, he finally took his leave.

It was a beautiful night outside, the air being laden with the fresh scent of forest and lawn, and the moon flooding all with her mellow radiance.

Down at the edge of the lake Old Dan Dooomsday was sitting on the edge of his barge, as it was grounded upon the beach, while Kate Laurel stood near by, chatting with him.

It was a habit of hers to come down to the ferry when she had a spare moment and talk with Dan, for whom she seemed to have a liking.

And her bewitching laugh rung out right merrily when Old Bum came up.

He was so odd-looking that he would have created a laugh anywhere.

"Oh, my! what a funny-looking person," Kate said, in a low tone to Dan, but, low as she spoke, her words did not escape the hearing of the man with the hair and beard of two colors.

"Yas, I'm ther funniest galoot ye evyer see'd," he replied, with a broad grin, in which he managed to expose a pearly set of teeth. "I know I ain't no great shakes fer beauty, but I'm chuck full o' fun."

"You surely look funny enough," Kate declared, frankly. "You must be what they call a one-sided man, because you look to be two men joined together in Siamese-twin fashion."

"Yas; I am a one-sided man, but I always side with the side that sees one and goes somewhat better for success. Ye see, when I was a young man I met my mother-in-law, and the effects was most disastrous. We had a few family words, when she snatched me bald-headed, and by the mystic wave of her hand, imparted two colors to my hirsute appendage—the red illustrating her red-hot temper, and the white, my fear of the female sex. I am so 'feared o' the critters, that I've been known to run ten mile afore now tew git shut o' encounterin' one o' 'em."

"I'll bet you have," Kate said, with a shrug of her pretty shoulders. "You have come to a bad place to remedy your weakness, then, for we girls of Dooomsday are very bold and forward, and are all looking for a husband who has passed his meridian and is liable to drop off within a few years, and leave us in possession of his finances, so that we may be in position afterward to marry for love, you see. I've been fishing after Uncle Dan here for some time to no avail, and now I do believe I shall have to give your case my attention."

Old Bum smiled and bowed with grotesque grace.

"I see! I see!" he replied. "You are quite a wag in your way. And were I ever so skittish of females, durn my old nose ef I wouldn't give in that you're the prettiest gal w'ot I've met this long time. So ef ye wanter splice, why jest give me a correct chance, and thar's no tellin' but what we may come to terms, pervidin' thar's no mother-in-law in the case."

"Which there is, and therefore I must reject you, my gentle wooer," Kate averred, laughingly. "Mammy and I are inseparable, you know, just as Deadwood Dick's Divide is inseparable from the bottom of this lake."

"Oh! ye know about that, do you? Wa'al, I'm hyar tew investigate thet matter. Ef Deadwood Dick ever drapped any filthy lucre into the bottom of that lake, I'm jiggered ef I don't sooner or later handle a sheer of et, myself, sure's my name's Old Bum, the bum of bums, from Bumville. Neow, what d'ye think o' that?"

"I think you're a fool," Old Dan interposed. "Ef ye try to raise that gold, ye won't live a week hyar in Dooomsday, I tell ye. It's p'izen business buckin' ag'in' ghosts!"

"That remains to be seen," Bum declared, grimly. "Thar ain't enough men in the town er ghosts in the swamp to euchre yer uncle. Besides, hyar's what will give me a helping hand."

And he nodded to Kate Laurel.

"You bet I will!" she assented; "if you are in dead earnest, I'm your pard in the search, and we will be known as Bum and Laurel, fortune-hunters. I think we can together raise that Divide, and will show Wild Walt and his

gang that we mean business from the start, if you are the man I take you to be."

"I'm that alligator, bet yer pret y eyes! an' here's my shake on it," and he extended his not unshapely nor work-hardened hand.

And the partnership was formed.

CHAPTER IV.

CAPTAIN POKER.

FROM that time on Old Bum and Kate Laurel were seen much together, and it was known in Dooomsday that they were united in the search for Deadwood Dick's sunken treasure.

Wild Walt heard of this, but was careful not to say much in the hearing of Bum, as he really appeared to stand in awe of that individual.

But he and his men were secretly in consultation, with the purpose of preventing the bummer and his fair partner from accomplishing their object.

Whenever an opportunity offered he tried to talk to Kate Laurel, but she invariably prevented all approaches by treating his advances coldly.

Still he persisted in annoying her whenever he chanced to meet her. One evening as she was sitting in front of the shanty which served her and her mother as a home, Wild Walt came swaggering along, his mustache waxed out to a needle's point and his general appearance dandified.

He tipped his hat gracefully as he came up, but Kate did not acknowledge the salutation.

"Ah, good evening, my dear Miss Laurel," he saluted, apparently not noticing her coldness. "Do I find you enjoying good health this evening?"

"You do; and you will have the goodness to pass right along. I do not care to cultivate your acquaintance."

"No? Well, I am truly sorry, for, as I have told you several times, I am greatly impressed with you, fair Katie. I am devotedly yours."

"Please move on, sir," she repeated.

"If that is your wish, pretty, I will not be so rude as to disobey. But let me tell you this: If you attempt to meddle in my business here in Dooomsday, which is to recover Deadwood Dick's sunken treasure, you will find yourself occupying a perilous position. I will brook no interference from any one in that matter."

"If you think I am afraid of you, you'll discover your mistake," Kate retorted. "I shall hunt for Deadwood Dick's gold, and shall pay no attention to any threats you may make. Indeed, I look upon you as one of the least of all men to be feared."

"You shall find out to your sorrow, my beauty. I may as well tell you that I have sworn to possess you as my wife, and so shall it be! When I recover the sunken treasure, then I'll build a castle here as a cage for my pretty bird."

"Monster! I'd sooner consign myself to the bottom of yonder lake than acknowledge such a man as you as my husband. Begone, before I call for assistance!"

"Ha! You will, eh? Who do you suppose would come to your assistance? By my soul, you tempt me by your words to be even bolder by stealing a kiss!" and springing suddenly forward, he seized her by throwing his arms around her.

Kate uttered a piercing shriek.

The next instant footsteps were heard approaching, and fearing an assault in the rear, Wild Walt released his hold and turned to defend himself.

As he did so he was seized and hurled to the ground with almost stunning force.

"There, you puppy, take that for your impudence, and if you give me any change back, I'll pick you up and dump your carcass into the lake!"

The words were uttered by the man who had come to Kate Laurel's rescue, and who was a person of striking appearance.

Of only medium hight, he was compactly yet gracefully built, and dressed in a nobby suit of spotless duck, with patent-leather top-boots, while a slouched sombrero covered his head.

In feature—or at least what was visible of his face—he was decidedly handsome, most of it being covered with luxuriant side-whiskers, a sweeping mustache and a narrow goatee, all of a blonde color, as was his hair, which fell in a mass of curly waves down to his shoulder. His eyes were dark, brilliant and magnetic.

He wore a belt containing a pair of revolvers; upon his polished shirt gleamed a magnificent cluster diamond pin, worth a small fortune in itself.

Ridding her of Wild Walt, the stranger turned to Kate Laurel and tipped his hat.

"Excuse me, lady," he said, in a deep, pleasant tone. "I trust I was not interrupting a lover's meeting when I upset yonder fellow."

"Oh, no, sir! I thank you very much for coming to my assistance. That ruffian was bent on kissing me, which, thanks to your timely arrival, he did not succeed in doing. I wish you had thrown him into the lake!"

"I have but to receive your orders, and in he goes," the stranger announced, with a smile.

Wild Walt had succeeded in regaining his feet, his garments looking somewhat the worse for the tumble he had taken.

His expression was something ferocious as he glanced down upon the new-comer.

"Who are you?" he demanded, with an oath, laying hold of a pistol in his belt.

"None of your business," the cavalier replied, with provoking pleasantness. "Saw you forgetting yourself, and thought I'd just bring you to your senses."

"Cuss you, I'll show you that I'm not to be insulted thus," Wild Walt cried, drawing his revolver and firing.

Kate Laurel uttered a scream of alarm. The next instant the Sport laughed triumphantly, after plucking a bullet from between his teeth, and holding it up to view, his other hand at the same instant drawing and cocking one of his own revolvers.

"You aimed well, young fellow," he said, coolly, "but you see I was too quick for you. Get you gone now, at once, or I'll blow your brains out! Go!"

The weapon was leveled full at the Tiger, and the command was uttered in a stern, ringing tone.

Wild Walt well knew that it meant death for him to disobey; so he uttered a savage oath and strode away.

"Never mind! I'll have your life for this!" he shouted back, fiercely.

"Beware that you do not lose your own!" warned the stranger, after which he turned to Kate. "There, ma'am, I guess you won't be troubled with the fellow's attentions again to-night. If he bothers you let me know, and I will undertake to give him a thrashing that he will remember."

"You are very kind," Kate declared, frankly. "Will you tell me who you are, so that I shall know whom to thank?"

"Well, I suppose I shall have to accommodate you with the desired information," he answered, smiling. "I am one of that class of mortals known as moving Bohemians, who live by their wits, and mix up matters a little occasionally, by doing both good and bad. The last place I struck there chanced to be more aces in my hand than there ought to have been, and I was invited to slope. I sloped at once, for I have a great terror of patent tight-fitting collars manufactured by Lynch & Co. As for name, they generally dub me Captain Poker."

"What a funny name!" Kate cried, merrily. "Oh! you men are deceivers!"

"It serves me very nicely," the captain admitted, gracefully. "A name is but a name, anyhow, whether good or bad. By the way, it is growing dusk, and I must see if I cannot get the old ferryman to take me over the lake yet to-night, as I must be well on toward Panther Gulch by to-morrow's sunrise."

"You are doomed to disappointment then, for, to my personal knowledge, you could not hire old Dan to ferry you across at this late hour. I've known him to refuse large amounts of money."

"Indeed! It is a serious disappointment to me then," the captain said. "If I could hire a small skiff, I could ferry over myself."

"There is but one on the lake, and that belongs to me," Kate answered. "I have never been upon the lake at this hour, and should hardly care to go with a stranger."

"But you could not believe any danger of simply ferrying me across, could you? Surely, you could not be safer here at home than in my company."

He spoke so earnestly that a thrill of interest and confidence entered the girl's heart.

"You seem like a gentleman—I don't know as I ought to be afraid. I will see in a minute."

She rose and entered the shanty, but soon returned with a pair of oars, her head ornamented with a jaunty chip hat, trimmed with a blue ribbon.

She looked so decidedly charming and pretty, that Captain Poker involuntarily uttered an exclamation of admiration.

"Allow me to carry the oars, my dear young

lady," he said, "for I would not have the hands of one so charming—"

"Bah! do not try flattery on me, as I am not in the least susceptible," Kate said, candidly. "I am one of the most matter-of-fact persons you ever met. Come!"

She led the way down to the lake shore, where a small skiff was drawn up on the beach.

They were about to enter, when a dozen men, headed by Wild Walt, came rushing down to the water's edge.

"Hold up, heer! This won't wash!" the Tiger cried, authoritatively. "Whar ye goin', my dandy ducks?"

"If it concerns you to know, I am going to ferry this gentleman across the lake!" Kate replied, coolly.

"Bet ye a dollar ye won't!" the Tiger declared, fiercely. "This hyar lake ain't no place ter go courtin' on, an' you can't have no beau, hyar in Doomsday, 'ceptin' me! Besides, this hyar sandy sucker's got business on shore yet awhile, ef ther court knows herself!"

"I have only my own business to mind, and I mind it except when it becomes necessary to mind some one else's. What do you want, Mister Rough?" Poker demanded.

"Get out of that boat, and you shall find out!" Wild Walt cried, savagely. "Ye insulted me, an' I demand satisfaction. Either ye shall spile my beauty or I'll spile yours."

"Man, you are a fool!" Poker warned, sternly. "You do not know whom you're challenging. Why, I could use you up so quick that you wouldn't know where you stood. Be sensible and go your way like a gentleman, instead of a ruffian!"

"I'm a perfect gentleman, and as such I demand satisfaction. If you are too cowardly to give it, I'll shoot you where you stand!"

Captain Poker laughed.

"I'll show you how much of a coward I am!" he cried. "Where do you want to settle your fate, and how?"

"Right up here in the street," was the reply. "Revolvers shall be the weapons, at forty paces!"

Captain Poker turned to Kate, then, who stood by the boat.

"I guess I shall have to oblige this fellow, miss, before ferrying across, as he seems determined on having his brains blown out," he announced. "If I should be the unlucky man, please see that this is delivered to the one addressed."

He then handed her a sealed envelope, and turned to the Tiger.

"I am ready. Pace off your ground!" he ordered.

They went up the street, from the lake, to where the ground was level, and forty paces were measured off, by Pony Quantrel, one of the Tiger's right-hand men.

Captain Poker then assumed a position nearest the lake, and Wild Walt further up the street.

"Let's know the rules of this affair!" the captain demanded. "Are we to fire until one or the other falls?"

"Exactly! Commence at the word three, and allow time to draw one breath, between each shot. Ef you've got any bequests to make, or word to leave, now's yer chance!" the Tiger replied, maliciously.

"Many thanks for your interest, but my ledger is all squared up!" Poker retorted. "If I were allowed to remark, however, I should insinuate that it would be advisable for you to provide yourself with a Babcock fire protector, before you begin your duel. They are quite a useful article, sometimes."

The Tiger uttered a harsh grating laugh, and turned to his associate, Quantrel.

"Count one, two, three, Pony. If the loafer attempts shenanigan, plug him on the spot!"

Both men drew their revolvers, cocked them, and took aim!

Both seemed perfectly self-possessed, although the Tiger's face was distorted with an ugly expression, while the captain's was most pleasant.

"One!" counted Quantrel.

"Two!"

"Get ready!"

"Three!"

Bang!

The weapons of the duelists spoke simultaneously.

The Tiger clapped his hand to the side of his head with a howl of rage.

His ear was shaved off almost as neatly as a knife could have done it.

Poker stood unharmed!

"Ready! One! two! three!" cried Pony Quantrel.

Again the weapons cracked, and a yell of exquisite pain followed!

CHAPTER V.

CALAMITY JANE ON DECK!

It was not Captain Poker who uttered the yell, although the Tiger's bullet had grazed his shoulder, cutting through his white duck coat.

Wild Walt was the author of the signal of distress, for he had again been hit by the unerring bullet of the blonde Sport.

This time it was the right ear which had been shot away!

With weapons dropped upon the ground, and his hands clapped to either side of his head, the Tiger began to prance around and howl as though he was upon a hot gridiron.

"Oh! curses on you!" he roared. "You have killed me—you have spoiled my beauty forever! May the devils seize you!"

"I believe it was a part of the understanding that we should spoil each other's good looks as much as possible," the captain remarked, dryly, as he put his weapon in his belt, but at the same time retained hold upon it. "I could have killed you as easy as to have maimed you, but I preferred to show you how small you are in the sight of others."

"You shall pay for it with your life," the Tiger yelled, savagely. "I'll have my revenge on you if it takes a lifetime."

He turned, then, and staggered toward the tavern, literally covered with blood that gushed from his wounds.

The crowd followed, and Poker returned to the skiff.

"Oh! sir, were you hurt?" asked Kate, anxiously, as the former approached the boat.

"Not at all. A bullet just kissed my shoulder—that's all. I could have killed the fellow, but am averse to doing such an act, except when it becomes vitally necessary in self-defense. Are you ready to give me a ride in your pretty craft?"

"Yes. But we shall have to hurry, or it will be pitch-dark ere I can get back home. The lake is haunted, you know."

"Or at least its orders are, by a pack of ruffians," Poker declared, with a light laugh. "You see, I don't have much faith in supernatural visitations myself."

He pushed the boat off into the water and sprung lightly in as it moved away.

Kate had the oars, and at once pulled out into the lake with a stroke that showed her to be an adept.

They had gone but a little ways, however, when a shout from the shore caused them to look around.

A young woman, clad in male attire, was running down the beach toward the water's edge and motioning them to come back, her slouch sombrero in her hand and her wealth of hair blown back by the breeze.

"Dick! Dick!" she cried; "it's me, Dick; come back! Oh! come back!"

Kate Laurel turned her surprised face toward Captain Poker.

"What does it mean?" she asked. "Shall I pull back?"

"By no means," the captain replied, quickly. "The woman—if such she is—is evidently demented, or mistaken. Pull on and pay no attention to her!"

Kate obeyed, but not without feelings of great curiosity.

Who was the woman on the beach? and was this blonde Sport anything to her?

Or was she, as he suggested, wrong in her mind, or mistaken in the person?

If so, his appearance, as they rode along, did not confirm the supposition, for he was silent, and looked sober and troubled. At least so thought bonny Kate.

Under Kate's able stroke, it did not take long for the boat to reach the opposite shore, where she pulled up close to the sandy beach, and allowed Poker to get out.

"Your kindness will not soon be forgotten," he said, looking down on her, with kindly expression. "As a token of my esteem, allow me to make you a present of this. *Au revoir!*"

He took from his pocket a handsome golden nugget, and tossed it into her lap; then, turned quickly and disappeared within the fringe of trees that bordered the lake.

"Oh! isn't that a beauty!" Kate exclaimed in real enthusiastic admiration, as she handled it over and over. "That must be worth a good deal of money, and amply repays me for the trip. Now, if I can get back safe, I shall be in luck; and too, I want to find out who that strange woman is, if woman she be."

She turned the little skiff and bending to the oars with a will, fairly made it fly over the water.

In a few minutes she grounded it upon the

beach on the other side, without further incident.

The strange person was not in sight, so Kate betook herself to her own home, where, to her surprise she found sitting upon the doorstep the unknown!

In face she was very pretty; a wild type of beauty was hers, not often encountered, the features being firmly cast, and set off by a big pair of dusky brown eyes, and a mouth of winning sweetness.

There was an expression upon her face, however, which betokened that at some period in her life she had been addicted to dissipation, or had met with some great disappointment or sorrow.

Her hair, as it flowed from beneath her snow white, jaunty sombrero, was of dark brown color and very luxuriant.

Her dress consisted of top-boots of a dainty pattern, met by light colored trousers, and a sort of fringed gray hunting-shirt, that reached nearly to the knees.

In a belt, around her waist, was a pair of handsome revolvers, and a sheath knife, while at her feet lay a repeating rifle of a handsome pattern, the sights being set with tiny, glittering diamonds.

She was conversing with Mrs. Laurel, when Kate came up, but arose from the doorway, to allow the latter to enter.

"Sit still," Kate ordered. "I am too warm, from rowing, to wish to go indoors."

"Kate, my child, where have you been?" Mrs. Laurel's reproving voice asked, from within.

"Oh! out for a little lark!" Kate responded, with a laugh. "While you were dozing in your chair, mother, that ruffian, Wild Walt, came along and insulted me by attempting to kiss me, when up came a dashing stranger, in real dramatic style, and attempted not to kiss me, but, instead, knocked the ruffian down, and rescued me, like a real hero—just think of it! He then fought a duel with Wild Walt, and shot both of his ears off; after which, he wishing to cross the lake, I rowed him over, in my boat."

"Do you know who that man was, miss?" the young woman with the rifle asked, looking at Kate as though she would read her through.

"Well, no, only that he gave his name as Captain Poker," Kate replied, innocently enough, whereat the other beauty laughed sarcastically.

"You are sure?" she asked.

"Of course I am!" Kate retorted, not exactly pleased at being questioned the second time.

"Well, that man was not Captain Poker at all, but instead a person of somewhat more notoriety, allowing that such a person as Poker does really exist," the young woman said.

"That man, if I am not greatly mistaken, was Deadwood Dick, of road-agent fame!"

"Deadwood Dick!" Kate gasped, putting up her hands. "Now isn't that just delightful! I wish I had known it at the time, for I'm dead in love with Deadwood Dick!"

"Kate! Kate!" chided Mrs. Laurel.

While the young woman with the rifle laughed—rather harshly, it appeared.

"You should first find out if some one else has not got a stronger claim," she remarked.

"If I'm not mistaken, Deadwood Dick is married."

"Indeed? Who to, pray?"

"To one whom you may have heard of as Calamity Jane," was the calm reply. "That's me!"

"You?" Kate ejaculated.

"Yes, me," was the reply. "I am Calamity Jane, and I am the wife of Deadwood Dick, reputed to have been drowned in this lake."

Kate looked at the speaker searchingly and with evident disappointment.

"If this is so, why did your husband not order me to row back to shore when you called and beckoned to him?" she finally asked.

"To understand that, you would have to learn what I do not just now choose to explain," Calamity answered, quietly. "Suffice to say that Deadwood Dick is my husband, and circumstances have separated us. Some time I may tell you more. Until then, adieu."

She picked up her rifle and walked off up the street, her every movement graceful and confident.

When she arrived at Solomons's saloon she entered and stepped up to the bar, behind which the proprietor himself now presided.

"Vel, vot you wants, annyhow?" the prosperous Jew demanded. "Vot you come here mit ~~trikes~~ ~~on~~ for, instead of dresses?"

"None of your business, Fritzy," was the

woman's retort. "Just trot out some of your best wine here, or I'll put a bead in your pate!"

Solomons put up his hand.

"My hevings! vat a pad girl!" he ejaculated, staring hard at her. "You don't vas drink?"

"Of course I do, you old Jewsharp, an' ef you don't pass over some o' yer best Catawba—in short, I'll depopulate your ranch in the jerk of a lamb's tail! I'm bad, I am, and my name is Calamity Jane!"

And with this announcement she brought her white little fist down on the counter with a force that made things jingle, and at the same time attracted attention from all parts of the room.

"Shimminy dunder lighnk! Sdop dot, vil you?" Solomons exclaimed, hastily reaching for the wine bottle. "You can haff anyt'ings you vant, 'cept monish, only don'd make so mooch noise about it."

"Tho't you'd come to time!" Calamity said, with a grin. "When I get mad, I make smoke rise above the hills, I tell ye! Did ye ever heer tell o' me, Jewsharp?"

"Py tam, no! und I never vants to," Solomons honestly declared. "You vas der paddest, viciket voman I neffer see. I vish you go right avay oud."

"But I won't, you see," was the independent assurance. "I'm in town on bizness, I am! I say, galoots, are ye dry?"

CHAPTER VI.

CALAMITY SHOWS HER HAND.

To ask any citizen of Doomsday if he was dry was the signal of a general drought; hence, when Calamity Jane propounded the question, full two score of eager mortals slipped into position near the bar.

"Yes, gal, I opine we don't keer ef we do," an old miner said, with a grin. "Tain't often we git a chance ter juggle family disturbance wi' sech a chirp an' purty girl as you."

"Why, I guess you're a little mistaken, ain't ye?" Calamity chuckled. "It's Old Dutchy's treat heer, not mine; so lavish your compliments on him."

Solomons put up his hands in horror.

"Dot ish not so! dot ish a lie!" he cried, vociferously. "I never vas ask nopoddies to drink mit me, so help me! Dot vimmens vas lie mit me!"

"See heer, Dutchy!" Calamity said, looking him sternly in the face, "do you mean to tell me you didn't desire me to call up the galoots and treat them at your expense?"

"Holy Moses, no!" Solomon fairly howled, calculating with lightning thought how many dollars and cents he would be out by such liberality—hitherto unknown of him.

"I neffer vas say noddinks of der kind. I shware py der Prophet. I neffer dreats nopody. I pays monish for my goods, und I sells dem for cash!"

"Durned ef that'll work," several of the crowd declared. "You've got to set 'em up handsome, in honor of ther arrival o' Calamity Jane hyar, or down comes yer ranch, ker-bang!"

"That's the ticket! Old Jewsharp shall stand treat or we'll turn the shebang into an orphan asylum," Calamity declared, with a smile.

"But seeing as he is so precious afraid of losing a cent, I'll go havers with him, and spill the dice to see who shall set 'em up. What say, Levi?"

"Mine name ish Jacob—not Levi," Solomons answered, "and since you pring so much troubles in mine place, I vill yoost shake you und beat you."

He was evidently glad of the opportunity to have a chance for his life, so to speak; so he produced the box, and threw three times, scoring only eighteen.

"Guess I'm elected," Calamity averred, throwing, and making but fourteen. "Horse on me. Now, then—"

She threw again, and turned up three aces—twenty-one.

"Shimminy gracious! vot ish dot? Twenty-one! Vel, I tie dot!" Solomons cried, excitedly.

But he didn't. Only twelve points turned up. "Horse apiece!" cried Calamity. "Throw back, Levi! If you throw twenty I'm bound to go you one better. Smack your lips, gents, in anticipation of drinking to the health of our Jewsharpic host."

Twenty did the proprietor of the Big Bonanza throw, with a vengeance.

"Goot!" was his comment, as he passed the box to Calamity. "Beat that if you can, young vimmens!"

"Just like eating chicken salad," the Girl

Sport assured, rolling out three aces the first time, with no apparent effort. "There you are, Dutchy! I'll take a little more sweet Catawba for mine. Nominate your medicine, feller-citizens!"

Solomons seized the dice box and hurled it savagely across the room.

"Py tam, I neffer shook dice again, so long ash I live!" he cried. "I am out shoost von week's profit! I vish I neffer see you, young vimmens!"

"Guess thar's a few others around this 'ere terrestrial footstool in the same fix!" Calamity chuckled, as she imbibed a glass of wine. "I'm the fly gal from Fargo—the cute from Carson, you bet! Any one who tries to get up in the morning to get ahead of your uncle, don't want 'er stop to button their gaiters with a hairpin, I tell you!"

And with this declaration Calamity turned from the bar, and sauntered about the room, taking an inventory of everything that was worth looking at.

In one corner, with his head bound up with blood-stained rags, sat the Tiger, Wild Walt. A more forsaken looking wretch it would have been hard to find.

"Hello! colonel!" she accosted with an amused smile. "What's the matter? Have you had your head in a threshing machine or been tryin' to shave yourself with a grass scythe?"

"None of your cussed business!" the Tiger growled, with an ugly oath. "I'm a bad man, I am, so keep away from me, or you'll get seriously hurt."

"You look bad!" Calamity retorted, serenely. "In fact, I may say you are positively the baddest specimen of humanity I have encountered for a long time. But, joking aside, who chewed off your ears?"

Wild Walter fairly gasped with rage, and fumbled blindly about his belt for a revolver.

"Let up on that!" Calamity warned, in a stern tone; "I mean you no harm, unless I am provoked to salivating you. I ask you a civil question, and you will save funeral expenses, if you do not get up upon your ear about it. Do you know who I am?"

"Cuss ye, no!"

"Well, I'll inform you. I am Calamity Jane, the thoroughbred, and the wife of Deadwood Dick, who shot off your ears awhile ago, and who fled at my approach. To him you have to offer up thanks for the loss of your organs of hearing!"

"The devil you say! Deadwood Dick is down at the bottom of Swamp Lake, this year or over!" the ruffian growled, eying the shapely woman savagely.

Calamity laughed.

"If you believe that you believe more than I do!" she declared. "Deadwood Dick is imperishable; his life is charmed. He has risen from the flames; he has been buried alive; the floods have surrounded him; he has been engulfed in quicksands; he has stared into the eyes of death hundreds of times, but lives yet, and I live, on his trail to hunt him down."

Had the Tiger possessed ears, he would probably have pricked them up at this—so to speak—but, being deprived of the useful appendages, he could only manifest his curiosity by the expression of his ugly countenance.

"So you and he aire out, eh?" he queried grimly.

"Rather!" Calamity replied, dryly. "That is, he deserted me, and fled from me, without just cause, and I am on his trail like a bloodhound, to hunt him down and bask his every design until he shall acknowledge the wrong he has done me."

The Tiger's interest increased.

"And so you believe the cuss is alive, do you?"

"Just as much as you believe that you've lost your ears," was the answer. "He never sunk with his horse in the lake as has been reported. I've heard the story, and discredit that part of it which claims that Deadwood Dick was drowned. He can swim like a fish under water, and I'm as well satisfied that it was he who played Captain Poker in Doomsday, to-night, as I am that I stand here!"

"And what is all this to me?" the Tiger demanded, eying her in evident curiosity.

"A good deal!" Calamity responded. "You are here in Doomsday to capture Deadwood Dick Divide, which supposedly lies at the bottom of the lake, and may or may not be equal to an immense fortune. I am here upon the track of my recreant husband, sworn to bring him back to me, or bring him into the power of the law he has so long baffled and defied. To

oppose him, I must have a clear cool brain, and good, sturdy backing. The first quality I am possessed of; the second I yet require."

"Then you want to enlist recruits, do you?" Wild Walt demanded, a strange gleam in his eyes.

"Exactly!" Calamity assented. "I want men who will assist me to right my wrongs, at the risk of their lives. They shall be well paid for it, and if there is no satisfactory result, should we recover the sunken gold there will be an equal division made. Remember, I am to be captain, boss and sole director of the movement!"

The Tiger nodded.

"I reckon I comprehend," he said. "You want to capture this lost duck of yours."

"I want either to capture him, or hunt him down to a corner from which he cannot escape, and there force him to acknowledge that I am innocent of the charges preferred against me, or—kill him!" was the stern reply.

"Well, I reckon the stockin' about fits my foot!" the Tiger grunted, placing his hands to the sides of his head with a doleful expression. "I ain't no fool to lose my ears for nothin', wi'-out revenge, an' I've got enough men to back me, you bet."

"Then get your men together; look well that no traitors are among them. When ready, I will swear them in, and the penalty of treachery will be death. As soon as you have your men picked out, send me or personally deliver me a list of their names; we will then get down to business, as soon as practicable."

With these words, Calamity turned and left the Big Bonanza, followed by many admiring glances—for hers were a face and figure that would attract the attention of any lover of womankind.

When outside of the saloon, she directed her footsteps toward the beach, upon which the light of the now late rising moon was just touching.

Her face was pale, and an expression of keenest sorrow mantled her features.

Down by the water's edge, seated in her boat, and gazing out over the blue waves, was Kate Laurel, her thoughts evidently far away.

Calamity saw her, when at some distance away, and a sharp pang of jealousy thrilled her being.

She paused for a moment, an expression partly of anguish and partly of anger upon her face.

"Oh! so she is out dreaming of the gallant Captain Poker, is she?" escaped her lips, in a hiss. "If so, I'll awaken her from her delightful reverie!"

She stole forward, with cat-like tread, her face colorless, again, and her eyes gleaming.

So enrapt was pretty Kate, in thought, that the jealous wife of the famous Prince of the Road gained a position within an arm's reach without discovery.

"What is the pretty stargazer thinking about!" Calamity then asked in sarcastic tones. "Is she dreaming of the noble Romeo whom she ferried over the lake?"

Kate turned with a violent start, and her face flushed with indignation, when she saw who had broken in upon her reverie.

"Does it concern you whom I was thinking of?" she demanded, very calmly—yet in her calmness there was coolness.

"Most assuredly it concerns me, because you have no business to entertain thoughts of one who is not yours!" was the retort. "You may as well know that first as last."

"Which does not certify that that one may not be mine in time," Kate returned, provokingly.

"I will learn you better!" Calamity cried, fiercely. "Pray explain what right you have to interfere in my domestic troubles, and create a wider breach than even now exists?"

"None, if you are what you represent. But I doubt this very much, never having heard that Deadwood Dick possessed a wife. Moreover, I am not positive the man, Captain Poker, is Deadwood Dick, whose apparition I have frequently seen upon the lake."

Calamity stood for a moment evidently at loss what to say to her unyielding rival, for it was quite patent that Kate was not in the least disposed to give in.

"Judging by your words, then, you would prefer my enmity," Calamity said, finally.

"I cannot truthfully say that I have any strong desire to incur either your friendship or your enmity," was the cold reply.

"Then, if you have no choice, your future conduct shall decide what my feeling toward you shall be," the Woman Sport replied, turn-

ing and striding back toward the main part of the village.

Kate Laurel watched her, a strange expression upon her face.

"What have I done?" she murmured. "I don't believe that woman is the wife of Deadwood Dick, whose image I have been infatuated with ever since I came to Doomsday—ay, and even before! Oh! why is it I cannot control my passion for this man, who perhaps never heard of me?"

CHAPTER VII.

A LETTER OF MYSTERY.

THE next day, early in the forenoon, Calamity Jane repaired to the post-office, after the stage had arrived, and asked for her mail.

As she expected, she was given a letter by the grizzled old miner who superintended Doomsday's not over-large postal service.

The letter was addressed:

"CALAMITY JANE,
Doomsday."

and the handwriting was somewhat feminine in its style.

Leaving the post-office, and going over to the Big Bonanza, Calamity entered and seated herself at a deserted table.

Here she opened the letter and proceeded to its perusal—but, lo and behold! there was nothing to peruse.

The inclosure was simply a half-sheet of ordinary white writing-paper, which to all appearances had never been used.

Calamity sat and stared at it in blank amazement, at loss to understand the meaning, for she had expected to find a message from Deadwood Dick.

What did it mean? Had he—

Her gaze once more became riveted upon the paper. Gradually, on different parts of the half-sheet, written words were beginning to appear, as if by magic.

Was it witchcraft?

Not at all. Calamity guessed that the words were written with some kind of liquid that remained colorless until warmed and exposed to the light.

In five minutes after the exposure to the sun's rays she was enabled to decipher the entire letter, which ran as follows:

"FAITHLESS WOMAN—Why come here? Do you think to profit thereby, or resurrect the dead? Be undeceived. No gold of mine shall be yours, nor shall you ever reclaim the dead, to whom when living you were so unfaithful. Beware!"

"THE SPIRIT OF SWAMP LAKE."

Calamity laughed quietly as she folded up the strange letter and slipped it into her pocket.

"It reads very ghostly indeed, but does not half convince me that Deadwood Dick is not alive. But why is it that he haunts this lake, playing upspook? Surely not because of the reputed sunken treasure. That would not long bother him. He must have some other object. Can it be that the girl is the cause? No! no! I cannot believe that, even though he believes me faithless."

It was all conjecture, and the more she thought about it the less satisfaction she derived.

During the forenoon she met for the first time the eccentric chap, Bum, who eyed her curiously.

"Durn my old cats ef you ain't a queer 'un!" he remarked, pausing to squint at her, at the same time stroking his strangely colored beard. "Spect as how you hain't got any female togs, hey?"

"What's it your business?" Calamity demanded. "I'm running my own affairs; you run yours, and be off with you!"

"Perzam! that's what's ther matter of Sal! Admire yer pluck, I do, cl'ar to the bottom of my stogies. My name is Bum, and that's my perfashion, too. S'pose ye ain't got a stray bit or so in yer wallet ter lend a thirsty mortal tew procure p'izen with?"

"Not a nick!" Calamity responded. "I've got through contributin' to the missionarie. Why don't you run your face over at the Jew's?"

Bum shook his head dubiously.

"Et won't work!" he sighed; "the Jew will stand no cheek or face. I've tried et o'er an' o'er, in various places, but somehow it wouldn't work. Thar war not beauty ner magnetism in my mug tew attract the bottle from its accustomed place upon the shelf, aided by the sympathetic hand of the barkeeper. But I tell ye, miss, ef I don't lubricate ere long all the cog-wheels of my carcass will refuse to work, and thar'll be a kersplosion."

"Well, the best way you can alleviate your

suffering, then, is to go and take a drink out of the lake!" Calamity said.

Bum shook his head.

"Too weak, gal—too weak," he protested, sorrowfully. "I can't stand the pressure, and must wither like a sunflower on the desert of Sahara."

"Alas! so be it, then," Calamity said, with mocking pathos, as she turned away. "I am afraid you are too far gone for redemption, already."

Bum eyed her sharply as she walked away.

"Cynical as a lobster w'ot's got a grip on yer toe!" he commented. "That's her w'ot I hear tell is goin' ter lay fer ther ghost of Deadwood Dick, or whichever it is. I must see my pardie, Kate, and see what her opine is on matters in general."

And he made his way to the Laurel shanty.

CHAPTER VIII.

A VILLAIN'S PLOT.

THAT day a rough miner, mounted upon a burro, arrived upon the shore of the lake, opposite Doomsday, and signaled for Old Dan to come over with the flat and ferry him across.

This was done, and Dan pocketed his little fee of two dollars with quiet satisfaction.

The miner claimed to be from the interior, and gave his name as John Brent. And no sooner had he struck the town than he made a bee-line for the Big Bonanza saloon and commenced to indulge in plentiful draughts of bug-juice, after the fashion of the average miner after striking it rich, as Brent from the first declared he had.

"Yas, my noble galoots!" he cried, gulping down a glass of "red-eye," "yas, I have struck it rich, me an' my pard; an' now whose bizness is et ef I celebrate a small sized Fourth o' Julia 'thout fireworks? Two long years hev we bin workin' our leetle private snap, on only two rations o' whisk a day, an' now I opine it's about time ter anniverse. The old man sed not to say nothin' about it; but ghosts and goblins, it's too good to keep! Why, ef ye would believe it, ther old man 'll be along heer wi' ther rules—ten on 'em—an' every one's loaded down wi' ther purtiest dust an' nuggets ye ever see'd. Lordy! but we aire rich enuff ter buy out Congress, we aire—me an' my pard!"

Of course the *habitudes* of the Big Bonanza pricked up their ears at this startling intelligence, and Wild Walt even so far forgot his own misery as to come forward with manifest eagerness, an evil gleam in his eyes.

"Who is this pard o' yours, stranger?" he asked, slapping the miner familiarly on the shoulder. "Mebbe I mought know him."

"Yas, an' mebbe not, 'ca'se he don't git 'quainted werry easy. His name is Old Jim Laurel, an' he's a man who mind's his biz ev'ry day in a week."

"Laurel, eh?" the Tiger commented. "We've a party of that name hyar in Doomsday—an old hen an' a chicken. Ever heer yer pard mention 'em?"

"Waal, neow, I opine!" Brent ejaculated; "an' that's jest what I'm heer fer, ter bring ther news that the old man's comin'. But I shall hev ter take aboard a leetle more nervine afore I go inter female presence, 'case how I'm purtier skittish of 'em. Wimmen was allus dreaded wuss by me than ther seven years' itch."

But it became apparent that the more "nervine" he got, the less he became nerved for the task of waiting upon the Laurels. In fact, it was not two hours from the time of his arrival ere he was too full for utterance and asleep in one corner of the saloon.

But he had "given away" what he had evidently been warned not to communicate, and Wild Walt had taken it all in with avidity.

He had learned that Jim Laurel was to arrive upon the opposite shore of the lake some time during the evening with his pack-mules loaded down with gold.

Unless Old Dan Doomsday broke his usual custom, he could not be tempted to go across after the passenger, who must necessarily have no choice left but to camp down where he was till morning.

Wild Walt hunted up his confederate, Quantrel, and in a low tone explained the situation to him.

"Thar's a pile o' gold within our reach if we only reach fer it," he said, significantly. "It's worth riskin' more fer than what lays in the bottom of the lake."

"Well?" Quantrel interrogated, "we must get that aire gold, and hev it for our own, eh?"

"Exactly!" the Tiger agreed. "Ef we don't make our pile now, we never will. All we

have to do is to work it right. Ye see, old Laurel will arrive on t'other shore, an' not bein' able to get across, he'll have to camp. Well, we can fix it. As soon as all's quiet and Old Dan's turned in, we'll cut loose the boat, and send Lanky and Blue Bob over to fetch Laurel across. When they git him out into the middle of the lake, they can pop him over, and pull fer the cover of the swamp, into which the boat can be run for miles, I think, as I believe the place covers a deal of territory unknown to us. We will at once follow, from this shore, in pretended pursuit, taking our passage in Kate Laurel's skiff. How like you the idea?"

"Excellent!" Quantrel replied. "But this matter must be kept quiet, or there'll be trouble. Do you think Lankey and Blue Bob will go?"

"Yes. They'll do 'most anything in the way of crime for money. The anticipation of sharing the fortune will be spur enough, I fancy. I will hunt them up, and put them onto the scheme."

Night drew on apace, but brought no change in the condition of the man Brent, for, although he several times aroused from his drunken stupor, he immediately imbibed enough "pizen" to fix him back in his corner again, insensible.

There would be no moon that night, for the sky was one mass of dark, ominous clouds that threatened to burst at any minute, and send a deluge of rain upon the earth.

Just when the shades were beginning to gather, a horseman was dimly seen upon the opposite shore, with several pack-mules behind him.

Old Dan was sitting down by his boat, when the report of a rifle attracted his attention for the first time to the man who wanted to come across.

"Humph!" he muttered. "Jest you keep right on firin', fer all ther good it will do ye. I don't run a boat to accommydate passengers at this time!"

After awhile the man on the other side fired again, and again, at which Dan chuckled, but made no move to start across.

And the fast gathering shadows soon obscured the other shore, after which no more was heard of the lone traveler.

Kate Laurel came down to the beach a short while afterward.

"What's the matter?" she asked. "Somebody want to come across, eh?"

"Yes, I reckon so," Dan replied, with a grunt. "Some miner, whose pard I fitched across to-day, an' he lays drunk over in the Jew's den now. One's enuff at a time o' sech a kind, so I'll let that feller stay whar he is till mornin'. He kin get the genuine mountain dew over thar free of charge."

"Hope it isn't papa!" Kate said, anxiously. "I dreamt, not long ago, that he was coming on to join us. When he comes, he is going to bring lots of money, and I should hate to have these roughs of Doomsday know it."

"Yes. They're jest the kit an' cargo what would not hesitate to rob a man—that is, taken as a whole! The feller, Wild Walt, is a ruffian of the worst stamp, an' they say that Calamity Jane is in with him. If that's the case, why, she can't be much better than he."

"I am afraid of her!" Kate declared, with a shudder. "She mistrusts me of being acquainted with Deadwood Dick, who, she says, is her lawful husband. I am fearful that she will harm me."

"Bah! she knows better than to hurt you, you may rest assured. She is likely jealous without cause. I don't believe that Deadwood Dick is alive."

And so the conversation dropped, and Kate soon after returned to her home, while Old Dan sought his—for the rain began to patter down in big drops.

Soon the storm broke out furiously, the rain coming down in torrents, the thunder rolling and crashing, and the lightning coming in incessant, vivid glares.

Most every one who was out of doors, availed themselves of shelter as quickly as possible; but it was not for four men of Doomsday to lose a golden opportunity, for the sake of avoiding a wetting.

Soon after the storm commenced, Wild Walt, Quantrel, and two other ruffianly looking fellows, appeared in the vicinity of the beach where Old Dan's flat-boat lay.

"It's a bully old night for our scheme," the Tiger said, with a chuckle. "All's clear as mud, and no one near to hinder. As soon as we hear a pistol-shot, we'll jine ye, in the little boat."

The ferry flat was then cut loose, and Lanky and Blue Bob leaped aboard, pulling out from

shore, with the great sweeps, while the Tiger and Quantrel remained behind, and watched and waited. By every glare of lightning they could discern the flat-boat nearing the further shore.

Then, there was a half-hour in which the lightning was not vivid enough to enable them to see the other shore.

"I wonder what success they're havin'?" Wild Walt finally growled. "They orter be comin' back by this time."

Just then a pistol-shot was heard!

Then followed a blinding flash of lightning.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SPECTER AND THE HAWK.

IN that flash of lightning, the two villains upon the eastern shore, were enabled to witness for the instant, that which was not unexpected to them—a strange, thrilling scene, wherein one man was standing, holding a pistol leveled at another man, who was falling backward.

Then, all was darkness, followed almost immediately by another prolonged glare, as if it were the will of the all-wise Ruler to throw light upon the deadly deed committed under the cover of night.

In this second flash, a boat was seen bearing down upon the ferry without apparent means of volition, while upright in the boat stood the alleged specter of Deadwood Dick, clad in a cloak of white, and holding a rifle leveled toward the barge, from which Lanky and Blue Bob were seen leaping in terror into the lake!

The rifle of the specter spoke even as the flash ended, and there was an unearthly yell, as if it had been the death-warrant of one of the outlaws.

"Cuss the luck!" Wild Walt hissed. "The thing in the boat is cleanin' out our pards! Hark! heer comes a gang from the Big Bonanza. We must slip away, and join in their rear."

From above the roar of the storm, many foot-falls could be heard approaching from the direction of Solomon's saloon.

Hastily the Tiger and Quantrel crept away along the beach, made a stealthy detour, and joined the crowd in the rear, so that their complicity with the doings on the lake might not be suspected.

Down poured the rain in torrents, but the thunder and the lightning momentarily ceased.

"What's ther matter?" Old Dan Doomsday demanded, running up, followed by Calamity Jane. "Who has stolen my boat?"

"Dunno!" was the grim response on every hand.

Just then there came another flash of lightning, of which all took advantage to stare hard upon the lake.

They saw the spectral figure of Deadwood Dick, standing upon the ferry-boat, but nothing else.

The mules and men whom the Tiger had previously seen there were all gone.

Had the Phantom of the Lake killed even the mules, and tumbled them, with their golden burden, into the lake?

That was the only conclusion the Tiger and Quantrel could arrive at.

To the others, of course, nothing was yet known of the true circumstances of the case; consequently, the Tiger and his pard were the only ones capable of appreciating the situation.

No other lightning flash rewarded the watchers' earnest gaze, for several minutes after the one that betrayed Deadwood Dick standing on the boat; and, when it did finally come, the boat was tenantless, and Dick was gone, or his apparition, whichever it was.

The next morning, after the storm was over, the lifeless remains of Lanky and Blue Bob were found washed ashore near the spot where they had embarked on their murderous mission, and a true suspicion that they had gone over to murder the traveler became rife.

The ferry-boat, stained with blood, was recovered; the man Brent was brought to his senses sufficiently to give a comprehensive statement regarding his pard, whom he still insisted was Jim Laurel, and had possession of their united fortunes in gold at the time of his landing on the other side.

When Kate Laurel and her mother heard this they were nearly distracted; and on their accounts, a search was made for the body of the unfortunate miner; but without result; no trace of his body, or of the pack-mules, could be found. Evidently all had gone down to the bottom of the lake.

Calamity met the Tiger on the street during the day, and confronted him.

"They say all the gold's at the bottom of the lake?" she said, rather interrogatively.

"Of course it is," was the reply. "Thar's a rich prize layin' thar fer somebody."

"Yes, but it won't be got at until the ghost is laid!" Calamity said. "It's a cold day when Dick gets left, when he sets out to do a thing, and I reckon he's set out to boss Swamp Lake. He's sunk the treasure where he calculates it'll be safe out of any seeker's reach, and will fight any one off from getting possession of it, until he sees proper to raise it himself. We must first plan to capture him, and then you will have a chance to work for the find. You may have the gold; all I want is Deadwood Dick himself."

"Capture be hanged!" was the Tiger's uncomplimentary answer. "How ye goin' to do it?"

"Leave that to me," Calamity replied. "I'm going to lay for him to night, when it is evidently going to rain again and be dark. In Miss Laurel's boat I'll venture into the timbered part of the lake. If I'm not mistaken, it won't take me long to unearth his ghostship. You and your men are to remain ashore, and when you hear three pistol-shots in rapid succession, seize the ferry-boat and come to the edge of the timber to my assistance."

"All right. It shall be as ye say this time, and we'll see how much ye accomplish. Ef ye don't make yer pint, then I'll assume the lead hereafter, you bet."

Calamity Jane smiled quietly.

"That remains to be seen," she said. "I do not as a usual thing say fail to any reasonable project, nor train under any man's lead."

She then turned away and entered the Big Bonanza, nearly in front of which she had met the Tiger.

Just before sunset the stage whirled down into Doomsday. What few passengers were aboard quickly disembarked and adjourned to the "hotel" to seek spiritual coolness, for it had been a warm day.

Among the passengers was a rather handsome man, attired in citizen's clothing, who, withal, had a keen eye and a hawkish expression of countenance that proclaimed him at least possessed of ordinary shrewdness.

He wore a sweeping mustache and long hair, and yet barely possessed the appearance of a regular frontiersman.

The moment he entered the saloon he saw Calamity, and she saw him. On his face came an expression of recognition and admiration, while on hers nothing but cool defiance and dislike was noticeable.

The man advanced to where the young woman sat, his face looking unusually hawkish in the smile it wore.

"My dear Mrs. Harris, how delighted I am to meet you here," he said, gallantly, doffing his hat. "I thought you were down in the southern country; I did, I assure you."

"I generally hover around the place where I think danger menaces my husband," Calamity responded, haughtily. "Sir, you will have the condescension to not address me further."

"A deputy United States marshal has, I believe, the right to address whoever he pleases," was the unabashed answer, "and I, Major Maguire, generally improve the liberty whenever I please. You should know better than to repulse me in such a place as this, Calamity, where my position is all-powerful."

"Bah! Try not to terrify me," she flashed back, menace in her tone and gleaming from her eyes. "Your very words betray the amount of sterling manhood that exists—only—in your mind."

The major laughed lightly, and taking a chair, seated himself so that Calamity could not readily escape from the corner where she was seated.

"Now you're a little too rough on me, dear," he said, persuasively. "Pray tell me, who loved you first—that infernal rascal, Deadwood Dick, or I—then a scout up in the Black Hills?"

"Stop!" she cried, imperatively, a wild glare in her eyes, which betokened desperation. "If I met you before I met the man whom my soul yearned for, and whose wild life I saved time and again, I knew you only to despise you. You have caused me enough trouble, sir; why seek to persecute me longer? You came to our cabin while my husband was away; you first insulted me, and when repulsed, commenced to make a ruffianly and disgusting plea of love. I was so horrified that I wept. My husband arrived outside the cabin just in time to hear a part of your accursed plea and witness my weakness. Misconstruing the truth of the situation, he fled in sorrow and indignation, and I awoke to find myself husbandless, through—"

instrumentality. Oh! curse you, Maurice Maguire—curse you!”

The deputy marshal watched her with an evil smile while she spoke, not appearing to be in the least put out by her words.

“Pooh!” he said, when she had done. “What have you lost? The man you profess to love is not worth one hair of your head, and is either dead or as good as dead, for I am here for the very purpose of ending his career in accordance with the law. I am empowered by my superior officer to offer a large reward for the culprit—that is, five thousand dollars for his capture, dead or alive. How does that strike you? You see I know the whole situation. I’ve had a party here for six months engaged in ferreting out the case. Your spouse, whom you believe to be dead, is just as alive as either of us, and, moreover, has been courting up the belle of the town—Laurel is her name, isn’t it? Well, that conclusively proves that he cares nothing for you!”

Calamity buried her face in her hands and was silent, while Maguire went on:

“I’ll not trouble you by saying more now, but think the matter over—think how you have bestowed affection upon that man only to be deserted by him in a fit of jealousy! Will you stand this, and know that he is lavishing his affections upon your rival, or will you come to the one who has no choice—no hope in the world but you? I will leave it to you to decide.”

He bent over then, quickly imprinted a kiss upon her head, and arising, strode toward the bar with a triumphant smile.

CHAPTER X.

BUM BELLIGERENT AND CALAMITY’S WATER WRAITH.

CALAMITY JANE did not stir for several minutes after the insult, but kept her face buried in her hands.

But, though she made no attempt to avenge herself, there was one who did, and that person was the man of contrasting hair and beard, Old Bum.

He had witnessed the bold act of the deputy marshal, and it seemed to fire him with anger, for as soon as Maguire reached the bar Bum strode up to him and tapped him on the shoulder.

Maguire wheeled like a flash, proving that he was always prepared to turn on the defensive.

“What the deuce do you want?” he demanded, surveying Bum with a half-amused glare, for he had evidently never encountered such a curious-looking specimen of humanity before.

“I want ter know ef thet gal over yonder told ye that ye could kiss her in public in that fashion?” Bum cried, menacingly.

“What of it?” the deputy blustered. “I reckon I kiss whoever I please, regardless of other people’s wishes. That gal is mine, over yonder, if ye want tew know it, an’ I’ll kiss her all I please.”

And with this declaration, he gave Bum a push, that was almost instantly answered by a blow in the breast that knocked Maguire against the bar with terrific force.

“Guess ye’ll larn ter keep yer flukes off a respectable citizen like me, arter this!” the veteran cried. “My name is Bum, from Bumville—no keards!”

It was a full minute ere the deputy could recover his breath, sufficiently to speak, so heavy had been the force of the blow he received.

When he did recover, he glared at Bum as if he could annihilate him instantly.

“Man! do you know whom you have insulted?” Maguire hissed, his face flushed with rage. I am a deputy U. S. marshal; so down on your knees and apologize, or I’ll have you hung before another sunrise!”

Bum gave vent to a snort of disgust.

“I don’t keer a conternental ef ye aire ther hull Government consolidated—ye can’t skeer me!” he averred. “I warent brought up in the woods ter be skeart out by buzzards. Ye insulted my friend, Kerlamity Jane, and ef I ketch ye at it ag’in, darn my left colors ef I don’t make yer heels break yer neck. I’m bad—very bad, an’ ef ye know when yer in good health, thar’s whar ter put on yer brakes an’ avoid an accident!”

Calamity came forward just then.

“See here, Nondescript!” she said, addressing Bum, “who told you to bite into this biscuit? I’ll tend to this individual myself. He did insult me, but I fear him not. Maurice Maguire, you shall pay for what you have done, and that, too, dearly!”

She then turned and strode from the saloon, her eyes gleaming with set resolve.

“Thank you!” Maguire called after her, “I shall not require any pay for my services so far!”

He then turned to Old Bum.

“So you won’t apologize, eh?” he demanded. “If you don’t, it will be the worse for you!”

“Bah! bah!” was the retort. “I defy you and all who back you. Lay but a finger’s weight on me and I’ll teach you that though you may have the law on your side, you cannot buck against the odds I can bring against you. I am heeled, and if it comes down to necessity, I can clean out the whole crowd, before I’ll surrender.”

He drew his revolvers, cocked them, and stood grim and defiant before the deputy, his very expression showing that he was ready for a battle if needs be.

“Shimminy gracious! Sdop! sdop!” cried Solomons, mounting the bar. “I vil haff no shoot pizness goin’ on mit in dis bremlises. I vas run dish saloon, und I plow der prains outside in off any veller vot gommdits so e fusses!”

But, he got down out of sight pretty lively, when he saw one of Bum’s glittering weapons leveled upon him.

“I dake it all pack—don’t shoot,” he roared from his refuge behind the counter. “I vas a square man, so drue ash vot I liff.”

“Come! out with it!” Bum cried, eying the officer, sternly. “Do you want to start a funeral enterprise right here, or not? Ef you do, say so, an’ I’ll do my sheer of ther undertakin’!”

“I guess there is no particular need of fighting over the matter!” Maguire said, with a sinister smile. “If I wished I could arrest you, but I’ll not do it this time. Maybe your danger will be a lesson to you to mind your own business hereafter!”

“Oh! you make me laff!” Bum retorted, with an expression of disgust. “The less of your rope you try to lengthen in this hamlet, the better it will be for you!”

He then turned and left the saloon, with the independent swagger of the King of Tramps.

Maguire’s hawkish gaze followed him until he had quitted the saloon, then he ordered a drink at the bar and gulped it down with a snarl, even as a hungry dog might have made over a piece of meat.

He then procured a large sheet of white wrapping paper and a marking brush, and seating himself at one of the tables proceeded to print out a placard, which he occupied some time in completing.

A crowd gathered around and looked on in curiosity to know what was the matter.

When finished, the work looked well, and read as follows:

“\$5,000 REWARD.

“To whom it may concern:—I will pay the sum of five thousand dollars into the hands of any person or persons who will capture and deliver into my custody, dead or alive, the notorious desperado, thief and ruffian-at-large, known as Deadwood Dick, who, though reported dead, I believe to be still living, and in this vicinity. M. MAGUIRE, U. S. Deputy Marshal.”

This, Maguire posted up in a sightly place, within the Big Bonanza, where it was read and re-read by all who chanced to drop in for refreshments—and they were not few.

Of course the reward offered created a buzz of excitement at once, for a thousand dollars was a goodly sum, and it took a good many days to pan that much out about the mining district of Doomsday, but five thousand—why, that was a rich strike!

Would the famous rover be caught?

There were various opinions on the subject.

Some thought he was alive and would sooner or later be captured, while others believed he was immortal and beyond earthly power to capture.

And thus the matter was forced to rest for the time being!

When night again fell over the little mountain city, darkness as black as Stygia reigned supreme.

The wind howled dismally over the peaks, and thunder growled rebukingly along the western horizon, as if as a warning to sinners to desist from their sinful purposes.

As soon as darkness had fairly settled down in its blank intensity, a female figure, clad in male attire, came stealthily down to the lake shore, where the ferry usually landed.

It was Calamity Jane.

In her hand she carried her rifle, and her belt was supplied with its customary weapons.

Her face was almost deathly white, and bore an expression of pain. Her eyes burned with an unnatural fire, and agitation was betrayed

in the tremor that occasionally pervaded her frame.

When she came to the ferry-boat, she sat down upon the edge of it, and was silent for several minutes, her chin resting upon her hand.

“Why is it that I am so jealous of him, if all is true I hear against him? To be sure, he had the first right to be jealous of me.

“Wild mountain wail that I was, I mingled in the roughest scenes and the roughest society of the roughest towns in the mountains. He took me, married me, and redeemed me from the curse that hung over me, never saying a word of the past—at least of my past but always elaborating on a happy future. Yet I always fancied that he was a little watchful and doubtful about me, and when he saw Maurice Maguire making love to me in our own cabin, I do not wonder he turned and fled from me as he would from a viper. And yet, I cannot—no, nor never will I give him up, no matter what damning devices he may bring up to test me. Trust him in the face of love or death, will I, until I find on my death-bed I am wrong—then, if I am wrong, I will repent when it is too late.”

As she ceased speaking she raised her gaze, as if praying to the Almighty to strengthen her resolve and purpose; then she arose, and glided toward the Laurel shanty, which stood not far from the lake shore, partially surrounded by a grove of maples—the remnants of a once heavy forest.

“I will see if they are all asleep,” she muttered; “then, if I safely return it, they cannot blame me for borrowing the boat for a little while!”

She said this as she neared the shanty, in the front door of which Mrs. Laurel was seated in her invalid chair, weeping, her head bowed in her hands.

“Poor old lady!” Calamity said, to herself, as she saw her. “She feels bad over the supposed death of her husband. I wonder if she feels half the anguish at heart that I do!”

She stood in the shadow of a huge maple, and gazed at the bereaved wife and mother, for a few moments, then, hearing the sound of voices in the rear of the dwelling, curiosity impelled her to glide stealthily in that direction.

Shortly she gained a position where she was able to dimly view a scene that set her pulses throbbing wildly.

Upon her knees, near the rear door of the shanty, knelt Kate Laurel, her hands clasped, and her head bowed as though in prayer.

Upon a camp stool, just before her sat Deadwood Dick!

It was not in flowing robes of white that he now appeared, but as his natural self, as Calamity had last seen him at their far-away mountain home.

Calamity stood as if turned to stone. She saw him, heard him speak, and yet could not move or speak, herself.

Kate Laurel was the first to speak.

“Oh! Mr. Harris, you have lifted a load from my heart, and I hardly know how to thank you for the words you have uttered. For the relief you have given me, however, I will thank you, sincerely and with all my heart, and should it ever come within my power to grant you a favor, rest assured I will do so, whether asked or unasked?”

“Miss Laurel, speak not so,” the voice of Deadwood Dick answered. “Although other ears may be listening, I will truthfully say that I believe you to be an estimable and highly respectable young lady, and any favor a gentleman could do you would be only a credit to yourself. What I have said, please let remain a secret between us, until the developments I mentioned, are matured. Then, I fancy you will not be sorry you ever met that consummate rascal and desperado, Deadwood Dick—a man whose friends forsake him day by day, and drive him to the desperate deeds for which he receives the curses of nearly all mankind. *Adieu, Miss Laurel!*”

The last sentence was uttered in a choked tone, as if the speaker were in sudden remembrance of some past-and-gone sorrow, or love.

He arose from his seat, mechanically, and disappeared among the trees, while Kate Laurel again buried her face in her hands.

Like a sleuth, and with cat-like footfalls, Calamity Jane followed after the man she had seen, or his apparition—in her delirium of jealousy, she hardly knew which.

Through between the trees she glided, sometimes almost near enough to touch him—and remorse tugging at her heart-strings.

Did, or did he not know that she was close

behind him! If he had the soulful, undying love for her, that she had for him, could he stride on, without looking back, at the beckon of his own conscience?

They were soon out of the grove, but he was by this time just far enough ahead of her not to distinguish her footfalls upon the soft soil.

Down to the beach he went, not a hundred yards from the ferry, and took possession of a light skiff that was grounded upon the beach.

Not far away lay Kate Laurel's pretty skiff, with the oars at hand.

Calamity glided quickly across the sands, and was in the little craft nearly as soon as the man she loved above all the world was in his boat.

Deadwood Dick pulled a strong oar, but with all his strength and experience, Calamity, true, loving, faithful, was soon close behind him.

On! on they rowed!

Nearer they ranged, until side by side they were, just at the edge of the dismal forest, the roots of which sunk deep into the bottom of Swamp Lake.

"Dick! Dick! Oh! God, come to me, and say that I am forgiven!" Calamity cried, her tone piteous and remorseful.

In the next boat now sat, instead of the former black-clad figure, the apparition of Deadwood Dick—white-clad, deathly of face, with glowing eyes, and an expression of unutterable sadness.

CHAPTER XI.

KATE TO THE RESCUE.

WAS this indeed a specter, instead of a human being?

As Calamity spoke, the strange burning gaze of the thing in the next boat turned accusingly upon her, but the expression on the face did not change, neither did the lips move.

A feeling of sickening horror took possession of the girl, and she put out her hands entreatingly.

"Oh! Dick! Dick! speak to me, just once!" she cried, piteously. "Tell me that you do not hate me, but that I am forgiven!"

There was no answer—no change in the stony stare in the eyes of the man, nor to the stony expression of his ghostly countenance.

With a scream of affright and terror, Calamity sunk back in her boat in a swoon.

The tax upon her courage was more than she could bear—the very thought that she was in the presence of the departed spirit of her husband, was so terrible as to drive her senses from her.

It was a long time ere she recovered her consciousness, and when she did so, it was with a violent start, and a gasp of wonderment.

What transformation was this?

Her recollection was of being on the lake, in the presence of the dread apparition of Deadwood Dick—but she was not there now!

Instead, she was now lying upon the hard floor of the strong cabin or jail of the town.

It was morning, and by the dim light that streamed in through the window, which was grated with iron bars, she was able to comprehend where she was.

"Caged!" she mused, gloomily, running her shapely fingers through her hair. "Let me see. I must have fainted, and drifted ashore—or else Dick piloted the boat ashore. Oh! my God, is he really dead? Am I after all mistaken, in believing that he is living? Oh! why do I not know—for after meeting him, and he would not speak to me, I must believe that it was his ghost I saw. And yet, did I not hear him speak to that viper that stands between us—Dick and I? Maybe I am going mad!"

She burst into tears then, and wept bitterly, her whole spirit seemingly entering into the grief.

After awhile she ceased weeping, but there was a haggard, remorseful expression upon her face.

"It was through the instrumentality of that ruffian, Maguire, that I am here," she said, with conviction. "He has a design—if I am right—in this. He proposes to keep me imprisoned in order to bring Dick to my rescue, and then capture him. But he will fail, there. Dick will never come!"

She was right, so far as the deputy marshal was concerned; it was he who was her captor.

During the early part of the forenoon, the door was unlocked, and he entered.

The expression of mocking triumph upon his face, exasperated Calamity, but she resolved to appear unconcerned and defiant.

"Poor child!" he said, patronizingly, as he approached where she was sitting upon the only bench in the rude jail. "It is a sin to keep you shut up in this dismal place."

"Indeed! I presume it causes you many pangs of anguish," Calamity retorted. "The only thing surprising to me is your foolishness—for you surely must be foolish if you hope to make anything out of this move."

"What move?" Maguire demanded, with a smile. "I have made no move, and formed no plan, as yet, except to capture the festive phantom, Richard, and marry yourself!"

"Humph! I thought that was your game, as soon as I discovered myself here, in jail. But, let me tell you that you are reckoning without your host. You think my being imprisoned here, will attract Dick to my rescue, but he will never come to my rescue, and you will have your trouble for your pains."

"I rather fancy he will come around, when he sees you put up as a target!" Maguire sneered villainously. "You seem to have tumbled gracefully on to my design. I shall hold you a prisoner for a reasonable length of time, to see if the bold Richard cannot be enticed from his lair. If I see that won't work, I shall have you taken from jail and shot for complicity in his crimes as a warning that road-agents and their spies are not wanted in Arizona. I think this will assure your pet desperado that his end is drawing nigh, and the most reasonable thing he can do will be to come in and surrender, or clear out for good and all."

Calamity laughed, scornfully.

"You know little of my husband, if you really entertain such an idea," she said. "If he is really alive, which I but half believe, any longer, he will not allow himself to be taken, you may rest assured! If you escape with your own life you may count yourself lucky!"

"I'll take all the chances, while, as for yourself, you have only one chance, which is this: marry me and accompany me back to the States, and it will be all right. Otherwise, you will be kept here until to-morrow, at sunrise, when, if Deadwood Dicky don't obligingly stumble into my power, you will be taken from jail and shot as his accomplice and spy."

"Very well. If necessary, I'll take the shooting penalty, a hundred times in preference to marrying a ruffian of your ilk!" Calamity firmly decided.

"If you have done, be kind enough to take your departure."

"I will accommodate you!" the villain responded, with a provoking grin.

"I will, however, see you again."

He then departed, locking the door after him.

Considerable excitement was created over Calamity's arrest, many holding that it was not right, and when Kate Laurel heard of it, she was indignant.

"It's a shame!" she said, to herself. "I do not see what right this deputy marshal has to hold her for her husband's misdeeds, if so be that she is the wife of Deadwood Dick, which now seems probable. There is evidently a serious rupture between them, and she thinks I am instrumental in furthering it. But she shall not think so, long. I will try to bring them together, for why should I not, after the good news Deadwood Dick brought me, last night? First of all, it remains for me to take word to him of Calamity Jane's arrest. But to do this, I must do what no one else has done—explore the forest in the lake, in quest of him!"

CHAPTER XII.

KATE'S EXPLORING EXPEDITION.

It was a bold decision on her part, but she resolved to do it in return for something Deadwood Dick had done for her, which will be disclosed in due time.

She saw now that there was little use to attempt to reach the gold that had been sunk in the lake; she saw that which was plain enough to her to satisfy that both Deadwood Dick and Calamity were more crowded upon by the people than they were sinning.

Therefore anything reasonable she could do for them she resolved to do, in defiance to the villainous intentions of either the deputy marshal or of Wild Walt and his element.

Supplying her boat with a small stock of provisions and ammunition, she next sought about the town for her nondescript pard, Old Bum.

But he was nowhere to be seen, nor did any one confess to having seen him during the morning.

"I reckon I shall have to go it alone," Kate muttered, as she went back to the boat, "though I should like to have had him with me."

Just as she was completing her arrangements to start, Deputy Maguire came down to the water's edge with a pompous strut.

"Hello, sis, where are you going in that

boat?" he demanded, in an authoritative way that instantly aroused Kate's "Irish."

"I should like to know what it is your business, as long as it's my boat! I generally go where I please with it!" she retorted, her face flushing with indignation.

"Oh! it's *your* boat, eh? Well, I can't help that. I'm having a rigid watch kept over this town, and no one can enter it or leave it without my permission."

Kate stared at the man in astonishment for a moment, then burst into a sarcastic laugh.

"The powers of a deputy marshal must have increased some then," she said, coolly. "I never was aware the law gave you the power to exert authority over everybody."

It was Maguire's turn to be somewhat astonished; he had not expected to encounter so sharp a girl.

"Well, I have the power, and you will save yourself unnecessary trouble by obeying me!" he declared.

"Do tell!" was Kate's response. "I dare say you'd like to have me desist from doing as I please?"

"You couldn't have hit it straighter had you tried," was the declaration, uttered with a degree of self-conscious pride.

"Then allow me to politely inform you that you are reckoning without your host, as I recognize no master but myself and the One above. Your preposterous supposition that you can order me about is highly ludicrous and insolent, so the sooner you get rid of a large per cent. of your freshness, the better your chances will be for surviving your honorary office."

Maguire flushed with rage.

"I'll show you what power I have if you attempt to leave the place!" he growled, menacingly.

"Will you, though?" Kate flashed, drawing a self-cocking revolver suddenly from her pocket and leveling it upon him. "Now, Mr. Deputy Marshal, I'll give you until I count thirty to put your anatomy out of sight around the corner of yonder building. If you fail to do so, you'll find that I am a most excellent shot, and not a bit 'skeery' about dropping a man of your type. Go, or I'll make you regret that you ever saw me."

Maguire's eyes gleamed luridly.

"Curse me! I ought to have shot you without parley!" he gritted. "You've got the drop, and I'll retreat!"

He did so, with a poor exhibition of grace, and Kate was left master of the situation.

Improving the advantage thus gained, she took possession of her boat and pulled out upon the lake.

As soon as she was well out from the shore, she headed her boat into the swamp—the strange gloomy forest which grew up out of the dark waters of the lake.

Not without some misgivings Kate propelled her boat up one of the gloomy water aisles, where in some places water-lilies rested upon the surface, and the frequent "chug" of the frog was heard, startled from his perch by the approach of the boat.

So thick were the branches and leaves overhead that, after she was fairly into the woods, Kate was unable to see but a short distance ahead of her.

There was a strange, peculiar odor on the still, damp air, and the weird silence lent a solemn charm to the surroundings.

For an hour she threaded the labyrinth of the place with careful oar-stroke—then she abruptly halted her boat in curiosity.

Just ahead of her was land, to either side of which the water diverged, proving that, instead of being the mainland, it was an island in the swamp. Fronting upon the water, however, precipitous cliffs arose to a height nearly equal to that of the trees themselves—cliffs which Kate at once perceived no ordinary mortal could easily scale unassisted.

Having discovered this much, she pulled softly on, careful lest the incautious dip of an oar should betray her presence.

In this way she made a voyage entirely around the island, and found the cliffs arose the same on all sides.

There was one place, however, where a narrow path had been hewn out up the sides of this cliff, and was the only visible route by which the top of the "lift" could be reached from the water's edge.

As a whole, Kate judged that the island comprised some forty or fifty acres, and was wooded upon the top.

"This must be Deadwood Dick's rendezvous," was her conclusion. "And, too, there must be

a secret concerning the place, or he could not stay here. I wonder what kind of a reception I'll meet with if I go up there? Be it good, bad or indifferent, I'm going to try it."

She pulled her boat close to the rocky wall and fastened it to a little spur of rock with a rope.

Stepping out, then, she cautiously ascended the narrow pathway, and was soon at the top, where, to her surprise, she found herself facing a pocket, which the sloping formation of land made a most perfect bowl or caldron in nature's mold.

There were only a few shrubs to be seen, while at the bottom were two shanties and some tents of considerable size.

Digging into the sides of the basin were some half a dozen red-shirted men, evidently mining for gold.

Kate was noting everything when a hand seized her shoulder and a man's voice exclaimed: "Young lady, you are my prisoner!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MASTER OF THEM ALL!

THE two prominent men of Doomsday were now undisputably Wild Walt the Tiger and Maguire, the deputy—that is, as far as strength was concerned, while Bum the Bummer was by no means to be unconsidered as regards popularity.

The Tiger, however, had no fancy for the Government official, who had so obtruded himself into the field in the capacity of boss.

Nor did Maguire seem to fall particularly in love with the bruiser, who seemed to desire a quarrel with the marshal.

During the forenoon of the day following Calamity's arrest, Maguire spent the most of his time in the Big Bonanza, endeavoring to make himself popular by treating nearly every one who entered the room; but in this liberality he purposely omitted to invite the Tiger to participate; and therefore, after standing it as long as his palate and temper would admit, the rough made bold to range himself up alongside the bar, and was not bashful in calling for whisky.

"Vel, you vil have to oxkushe me, Misder Valter!" Solomons said, "but you see id vas against mine rules to ledt you haff anodder shmile until you vas pay me dot seven dollar vot you haff on der shlate."

"Get out, you old limberger!" the Tiger exclaimed, with ferocious mien. "I'm drinking wi' my friend heer, ther deputy. Scratch it on his list."

"And, seizing the bottle from the Jew's hands, he proceeded to insert the nozzle between his lips, and help himself in a liberal way.

But he had not absorbed enough to do him any harm before the bottle was struck by the iron fist of Maguire and dashed into atoms. Whereupon the Tiger turned upon him with a drawn revolver.

But it chanced that the deputy had one drawn also, and the two men stood glaring with anything but friendly expressions of countenance.

"I reckon you are a little mistaken in your opinion as to who pays your whisky bills!" was Maguire's reminder. "When I want you to drink with me I will give you a personal invitation!"

"Ye didn't invite me, then?" Wild Walt sneered, savagely.

"Well, I reckon not! I generally am particular as to whom I drink with."

"Then ye meant ter slight me when ye war settin' 'em up fer ther rest o' ther boys?"

"Well, yes, ef ye like et so—though I did not think you of enough importance to notice."

"Waal, you'll just about find out how much importance I am!" the Tiger returned, flaming with rage. "I'm the boss of this hyar hamlet, I am, an' when a feller insults me he might as well take his choice o' two things—get down on his knees and apologize, or commit suicide, fer I'll grind him into bone-dust ef he don't. Any one as knows me will tell ye as how I'm terrific bad."

The deputy marshal may have thought so, too, but he mustered up courage enough to force a derisive laugh.

"I guess you won't hurt many blind cats!" he retorted, scornfully. "The best thing you can do is to go home and go to bed!"

A hellish gleam shot from the eyes of Wild Walt, and, with a panther-like leap, he sprung upon the deputy, his lips emitting a hiss like that of some venomous serpent.

The next instant the two men were clinched and rolling upon the floor, snarling and growling like a pair of fighting dogs.

"I'll murder you!" the deputy roared, furiously, struggling to get free.

"When ye do your beauty will be gone, like mine is!" the Tiger cried, he having the top and endeavoring to get a hold on his enemy's nose with his teeth.

Nor was it long ere he succeeded in doing so, and off came the better part of Maguire's nasal appendage, to be spat out upon the floor.

Vociferous cheers went up on either hand, for the average class of the *habitués* of the Bonanza were in their element when any entertainment of such thrilling interest occurred.

Maguire howled with actual horror, both on account of the pain and at the disgrace of parting with his "smeller," and his struggles to get free were terrible. But the Tiger held him firmly down, and succeeded in drawing his knife.

"Now, then," he cried, fiercely, "I've got yer life and death right in my hands, and ye know it, so jest quiet down an' be sensible, or I'll jab you straight through the heart."

And Maguire did quiet down almost instantly, as it was evident he did not feel prepared to part with his earthly hopes and aspirations on so short notice.

A malicious grin distorted the Tiger's ugly visage when he saw his enemy succumbed.

"Thort ye'd acknowledge me boss," he grinned, "when ye saw my prowess. Now, d'ye know what I'm goin' ter do with you?"

The officer did not answer, but there was a look in his eyes that told better than words that he did not expect much mercy.

"Won't answer, eh?" Wild Walt growled. "Well, I kin tell ye, jest the same. Ye can't help but listen. You've got to promise to never again raise your hand against me, or I'll cut yer heart out right whar you lay! Speak! I'll give you but one instant to answer!"

"I'll answer for you—no!" a stern, ringing voice cried, and simultaneously a man leaped through the crowd, and dealt the Tiger a blow with the butt of a revolver that tumbled him senseless to the floor.

The new-comer was Deadwood Dick!

Nothing was there ghostly about him now, for he was dressed in garments of black, and looked every bit as natural as when he had made himself famous by his exploits in the Black Hills and other parts of the Far West.

Maguire gave a gasp when he saw him, and sprung to his feet.

"Hurrah! Here is Deadwood Dick! I'll pay a thousand dollars for his capture, alive!"

It was a big sum; the crowd hesitated but a second, and then rushed upon the noted hills rover with yells of victory.

But they recked not the cost of capturing a man of Dick's caliber.

"Back! back, you hounds!" he cried. "If you don't, I'll teach you a lesson you'll not soon forget!"

CHAPTER XIV.

A WATER SURROUND.

THE warning uttered by the Prince of the Road, however, had no effect, for they rushed with all determination to capture the man and thus secure the coveted reward.

Bang! bang! bang! The revolvers of Deadwood Dick spoke spitefully until the last chamber had been emptied, with telling effect; then, clubbing his weapons, the desperate man struck right and left, and forced his way toward a window, through which he dashed, carrying sash and glass with him.

Headed by Maguire, who in the excitement had forgotten all about his lost nose, the crowd followed suit with loud yells but to no purpose, for too fleet of foot was the Prince of Border Braves to be overtaken, and long ere his pursuers struck his trail and reached the water's edge, he was skimming over the lake beyond rifle range.

Having no craft except the heavy ferry-boat to give pursuit in, the deputy and his backers could only stand on shore, and howl forth their curses after him, as a few minutes later they saw him glide out of sight into the cover of the swamp forest, with a mocking shout of defiance.

Maguire fairly howled himself hoarse with rage at his defeat.

"Some one set to work and make some boats. I'll give a hundred dollars apiece for them!" he cried. "The cuss lives somewhere in that swamp, and we'll root him out, if it costs us a hundred lives. Will you stand by me, men?"

There was an affirmative shout from many, which spoke of the attraction the reward was to them, irrespective of any interest they might have in him personally.

A canvas of the crowd was made, and an old hunter agreed to furnish some dug-outs for the lake, for the price offered by the deputy, and at once set out into the mountains to select suitable trees.

By the middle of the afternoon half a dozen rough dug-outs, capable of holding three men each, were ready and launched into the lake, and Maguire had to "fork over," which he did with bad grace.

Selecting a dozen and five rough but thorough frontiersmen, besides himself, and placing another squad to guard the jail, the dug-outs were entered, and the rude paddles manned.

Maguire's craft then took the lead, pulling for the timbered portion of the lake.

Soon the forest overhead shut out their view of the sky, but they kept on cautiously, Maguire directing the movements of the expedition and keeping a watch ahead.

By following nearly the same route that Kate Laurel had, they in due time came in front of the island, where a halt was made by five of the canoes, while the sixth under Maguire made a circuit of the island for observations.

He then rejoined his comrades, with grim satisfaction at his success.

"Yes, this is the place!" he said, "and a better natural fortress it will be hard to find. There are, no doubt, guards at the top, so that it will be a difficult job to effect a capture in that direction, even though I have discovered where a narrow path leads up!"

"What's to be done then?" one of the men demanded.

"There is only one way I can see—that is, take to the trees, and see if we cannot get a peep upon top of the island. If we can, we can also most likely form an ambushade about the island, and pick off the inhabitants thereof, at our leisure. Away, now, and form a circle. Then one man from each boat take to the trees, the others remaining below, ready for fight or flight, in case of a surprise. After making observations, come down from the trees, and meet here, to compare notes, whereupon we will form future plans of action."

Accordingly, the boats dispersed to different positions around the island.

The Tiger, Wild Walt, recovered shortly after Deadwood Dick's flight from Doomsday, but took good care to keep himself out of pistol range of Maguire, whom he had reason to expect would seek a terrible revenge for the loss of his nasal appendage, which had forever spoiled his beauty.

But after Maguire's expedition had started out upon the lake, the Tiger once more crept forth from his lair, and "made himself promiscuous" again.

When he learned who it was to whom he was indebted for his pair of black eyes, he did not say much, but inquired into the object of Maguire's expedition, an evil gleam in his eyes.

When it came toward night, he purchased a gallon of whisky from Solomons, and set out for his shanty, where he remained until it was quite dark.

He then set out, still carrying the demijohn with him, and made his way to the jail, in front of which half a dozen roughs were standing guard—though, by the way, they were not standing, but reclining.

The Tiger's advent was hailed with a grunt of approval, especially when they saw the demijohn.

"Hello! What ye got thar?" Snaky Sol cried. "Ef it's p'izen, jest pass it this way, fer I'm drier than a salted codfish out o' water."

"The Tiger never forgets the poor and needy," Wild Walt replied, with a pretended drunken lurch and hiccup. "I'm ther best feller in Doomsday; an' I don't keer a cent whether ye side wi' the cuss, Maguire, or not; heer's ther b'hoy w'ot ain't afear'd to treat!"

And he passed the jug to Snaky.

This hit the guards in a tender spot, and they all manifested their approval by sundry complimentary ejaculations.

Each man took a long pull, and a strong pull at the demijohn, and when the jug left the hands of the sixth man, there was not enough 'family disturbance' in it to drown a fly, while a quiet gleam of satisfaction lurked in the eyes of the earless Tiger!

"Drink long and well, my hearties," he muttered, "and I'll wish you all manners of good luck."

It was not long ere the guards ceased to talk, and then began to nod.

While the Tiger lit his pipe, and patiently waited, triumph broadly expressed all over his villainous countenance.

In half an hour the six guards were too soundly asleep to be easily awakened. Then the Tiger produced a duplicate key, and opened the jail door.

"Calamity Jane!" he cried, "you have your liberty."

CHAPTER XV. THE ISLAND SIEGE.

At first there was no answer from within the jail. Evidently the prisoner did not feel assured, but feared that some trap was set for her.

When the Tiger repeated his declaration, however, in a louder tone, she made her appearance in the doorway.

"What is the matter? What do you mean?" she demanded, staring first at him, and then at the drugged guards who lay strewn around.

"I mean that I have come to give you your liberty!" Wild Walt replied, bowing. "I've changed my views as concerns many matters within the last few hours, and have made up my mind to be a somewhat better man."

"A very commendable resolution," Calamity remarked, "if you mean what you say, which I doubt. Why should you come to release me though?"

"For two reasons: You selected me as one of your confederates, firstly. Secondly, your husband, Deadwood Dick, is in deadly peril, and with you, I propose to go to his assistance."

Calamity laughed.

"I can't hardly believe that. After his shooting your ears off, you would not be likely to be so forgiving."

"Because you do not know me. I've a pile of humanity about me, and I've jest about made up my mind to brace up and do better hereafter without regard for personal grievances. Therefore, I reckon it will be on the safest side to jine in wi' Dick, an' help his case through."

"Well, admitting what you say to be true, what is the matter with Deadwood Dick that we should go to his assistance?" Calamity asked, still doubtingly.

"He is being set upon by the fellow Maguire, and a lot of the boys, who have gone into the swamp to hunt him down. If they find his rendezvous, they'll make it warm for him."

Calamity looked anxious at this, showing her continued deep interest in the handsome knight of the West.

"If that is so, I must, indeed, go to his assistance," she decided. "How did the expedition start out without boats?"

"They were cute enough for that, you bet!" the Tiger explained. "Maguire forked over six hundred, fer havin' six dug-outs made. But, I don't keer for that; I jest happen to know whar thar's an Indian birch canoe. So come along, and we'll soon be on ther ragin' deep in s'arch of Richard the Rover."

Calamity was silent a moment, in meditation; then said:

"Very well, lead ahead; but look out that you don't attempt any tricks, for I shall watch you like a hawk, and shoot you instant if I catch you at any."

They then glided away from the vicinity of the jail, and followed along the lake shore for some distance.

Finally they came to a swail of rushes, which extended out into the water, and, hidden therein, the Tiger found the light birchen canoe he had spoken about.

Pulling it out into clear water by the edge of the bank, he and Calamity both entered, and he seized the paddle.

Soon they were gliding out upon the lake, toward the somber line of timber which contained the lair of Deadwood Dick.

"You will have to nose along carefully, so as not to encounter any of the other canoes," Calamity cautioned, "for were we to encounter them they might make us trouble!"

And so they moved along with great circumspection and silence.

Let us return to Kate Laurel, whom we left upon Deadwood Dick's island.

When she heard the voice of the man behind her, and heard him speak so authoritatively, his grasp resting upon her shoulder, she uttered a little scream, and wheeled around.

"I am your prisoner, did you say?" she cried. "When did you arrive at that conclusion, pray?"

"Just now," the man responded, smiling. "You do not know where you are, perhaps?"

"Oh, yes I do!" was the retort. "I'm at the end of my journey to Deadwood Dick's island."

The man laughed.

He was a dashing looking person, of some eight-and-twenty years, possessed of a strongly-

built and graceful form, of commanding presence, and a face wherein was much to admire, especially as regarded his eyes which were dark, brilliant and expressive.

Long hair, falling in ripples upon his shoulders, and a graceful mustache and goatee, gave him an aspect pleasing to the eye.

Kate was surprised, as she had expected to see one of the typical border ruffians, such as peopled the little town of Doomsday.

"Yes, this is Deadwood Dick's island, and whoever comes here, lose their liberty!" he answered. "I am placed here to discharge the agreeable duty of seeing that whosoever cometh here, escapeth not. My name is Lloyd."

"And mine is Kate Laurel, and I have come here to see Deadwood Dick," she said. "Will you have the kindness to show me into his presence?"

Lloyd whistled.

"So, you are Miss Laurel, eh, whom I judged by his say, our captain has been rather soft on? Perhaps I may tell you something that will surprise you, ma'am?"

"What?" Kate queried, curiosity getting, for once, the best of her.

"Well—this," Lloyd answered hesitatingly. "Deadwood Dick is married, but separated from his wife, Calamity Jane, who is lurking in this vicinity trying to catch him. If she were to catch you here, I fancy there'd be some hair-pulling."

"I am quite well posted on the matter you speak of," Kate returned—"even am slightly acquainted with Calamity Jane. Concerning her, I come here to see Deadwood Dick—not to woo him, as you seem to infer."

"Well, in that case, of course I have nothing to say, more than this. You can have the privilege of roaming about the basin, until Deadwood Dick comes, but you are warned against attempting to escape."

"I have no desire to do so until I see your captain. When will that be?"

"I do not know exactly when he will arrive home from a row on the lake. When he does, I will apprise him of your presence in the basin."

Taking this for a hint that she could have the privilege of entertaining herself, Kate strolled away, down into the bowl, in the sides of which miners were working.

They eyed her with much surprise, but said nothing.

There was not much to be seen about the place, except the rough habitations of the miners, which were, however, clean and tidy.

After becoming tired of roaming about, Kate returned to the high ground, where she had left Lloyd.

The guard was now lying upon the ground, peering over the edge of the bluff, into the water, below.

"What do you see?" Kate asked. "Is your leader coming?"

"No!" Lloyd answered. "I hear the dip of paddles—more than belong to one boat. Must be that enemies are coming!"

Kate also knelt and peered down through the canopy of leaves and limbs below, a half frightened expression upon her face.

Suppose Calamity Jane should come and find her here, at the retreat of Deadwood Dick—would she not fly into a terrible passion, and in some way seek to avenge her fancied wrongs?

Kate was brave, in a mild way, but she had a fear of the dashing Calamity that she hardly felt for any one else.

Down through the branches could here and there be seen a glimpse of water but nothing of boats although the dips of paddles were to be heard distinctly.

"It's prowlers of some sort," Lloyd remarked "an' I reckon they're a-searchin' for the way here."

"Perhaps it is Maguire, the deputy marshal, and some of his bought confederates?" was Kate's suggestion. "It was he who was the cause of my coming here. He has, or did have, when I left Doomsday, Calamity Jane locked up in jail, hoping by holding her a prisoner there, to entice Deadwood Dick into the town, so that his capture could be effected."

Lloyd laughed quietly at this.

"Why Deadwood Dick is in Doomsday every day, nighabouts, and has been right around amongst the folks. He may have gone there to-day. If so, he would likely hear that Calamity was jailed. Just you take one of my revolvers and keep watch, while I look along further down the island and see if I can discover any one."

He handed Kate one of the weapons, with the

instructions to fire if she saw any of Maguire's party. Then he crept along at the edge of the abyss, with the purpose in view of touring the island.

He had not been gone long when Kate Laurel's eyes, for the first, caught sight of something which nearly froze the blood in her veins.

Just opposite her a tree rose higher from out the lake than did its companions, and through a break in the foliage she saw a man's face protruding—the face of one of the roughest of all Doomsday ruffians.

He was glaring straight past her down into the valley. She could also see that he held a cocked revolver.

She pretended not to notice him, but knew well enough that it was his purpose to shoot her as soon as he had completed observations, and then dodge down the tree again.

All depended upon her quickness of action to save her life, and she did not hesitate. With a swift movement she cocked, leveled her revolver and fired, her trained eye on the sight making her aim sure.

Following the report of the pistol, there was a howl of rage and pain. Crash! crash! went a heavy body down through the branches of the trees, and fell with a loud splash into the water below.

The next instant there were several reports of pistols, and half a dozen bullets whistled close about the spot where Kate was standing.

With a cry of alarm, she turned and fled down into the basin, to escape being riddled, as she readily understood that there was more than one man ambushed in the tree-tops surrounding the island.

Her cry of alarm gave the signal to Lloyd, and he, too, started on a run for the heart of the basin, yelling to the miners to do likewise, to which they responded in double-quick time.

A few shots from the tree-tops followed, but owing to the distance fell short of their mark, and the miners reached the vicinity of their tents and cabins in safety.

"The deuce is to pay now!" Lloyd growled. "The island is surrounded, that's patent; and, what's more, they have us, despite the bluffs being an excellent defense. They've got their men in the tree-tops to keep us here, while they can send another gang up, by way of the path, to fight with us. It is a matter of time and numbers, then. I would that the captain were here!"

"He may come soon!" Kate said. "If so, that will be one point better, at least. Do you anticipate an attack, direct, at once?"

"Hardly before it gets dark. Nevertheless, we must be prepared and ready for emergency. Granby, you gather all the arms and ammunition in the camp, and bring them here, ready for use. Then, when it becomes dark, it may reasonably be expected that we shall have our hands full!"

And it was not long ere the shades of night began to creep over the earth, with the thunder muttering along the horizon.

Another wild night was impending, and the little band in the basin awaited for it to fully settle down, with no particularly sanguine expectations as to the general results.

Despite of Lieut. Lloyd's request for Kate to take to one of the cabins, as security for her personal safety, she persisted in remaining outside with the men, equipped with a rifle and a pair of revolvers.

"Why, I am not afraid," she would protest, when urged to seek shelter. "I don't hesitate a bit to fight against such a man as Maguire."

So the men allowed her to have her own way, although Lloyd undertook the burden of entertaining her, which he accomplished so successfully, that they were soon pleasant acquaintances.

When it was just sufficiently dark, as he thought, the lieutenant made an attempt to creep up toward the bluffs, on a prospecting tour; but he hadn't got far, ere a bullet sung so close past his ear, that for a moment he thought he was struck, and made lively time back to camp.

"They have got sharp eyes!" he averred. "So it won't do to be off guard. Get your weapons ready, and keep all your ears and eyes open, without speaking!"

The order was obeyed, but the muttering of thunder soon disturbed the silence and the wind began to sigh with mournful sound over the cliff. Then there came a flash of lightning, and Lloyd gave a sigh of relief.

"We shall soon know the worst," he observed. "As soon as the lightning increases we can see whether they are coming or not. Down flat in the grass now, with your rifles ready for use."

Ten minutes passed; then there came a vivid flash of lightning and instantly a crash of thunder.

A moment later the cabin nearest them burst into flames.

It had been struck!

And shortly after, the party under Maguire, were seen pouring down the slope into the basin.

CHAPTER XVI.

A GENERAL SMASH.

MAURICE MAGUIRE had worked his plans fairly well.

First, he had stationed his men in the tree-tops to make a reconnaissance; then, on their reporting back again, he sent them once more into the trees with directions to keep the islanders down in the valley by firing at them.

This gave him an opportunity to get his reserve force upon the island by way of the pathway which ran up the face of the bluff. This he proceeded to do just as soon as it became dark, gaining the top of the bluffs overlooking the basin without trouble.

As soon as the storm broke out he rallied his men and made a rush down into the bowl—the other men still being positioned in the tree-tops, with orders to remain there till called for.

Into the basin rushed the man-hunter and his band of roughs, bent on capturing the coveted character, whose name was almost a legion wherever he went.

"Fire at the next flash!" were the orders of Lieutenant Lloyd to his men as they beheld the oncoming of the Vigilantes. "They do not exceed us in numbers, an' we orter break 'em up purty easy."

A few minutes later there came a vivid glare, and on the instant they poured a volley into where they saw the enemy rushing toward them.

But, as there followed a yell of derision, it was evident that the bullets had not stayed the assault.

On came the foe, with fierce cries, and a moment later they fired upon the island party in return for their salute.

It was a deadly volley, for five of the miners received their death wounds.

"Stand your ground!" Lloyd yelled above the din of the battle and storm. "Never say die! Fire!"

And they did fire with a vengeance, after which all became dire confusion, as the two parties met and attacked each other with clubbed rifles.

From that moment the battle was fierce, but quick and decisive, and wound up in the defeat of the islanders under Lloyd, not one of whom except Lloyd and Kate remained standing.

The latter was but little hurt, but Lloyd had suffered considerably, having received one wound in his side and the other grazing him above the temple, to say nothing of a rap he had received beside the head with a clubbed rifle.

After he saw the last man but himself fall, he considered it as about useless to resist any further, and cried for quarter, whereupon the conflict ceased.

The cabin was now beginning to give considerable light, making the scene of battle dimly perceptible.

Maguire advanced, an expression of diabolical triumph upon his face.

"Well, you see what you got by not surrendering!" he cried. "The death of all these men you are responsible for!"

"By no means!" Lloyd retorted, with spirit. "You were the assailants—we the defenders. I am not responsible for your sins. I only cried quarter for the sake of the young lady here!"

"Maybe you want another whirl at self-defense? If so, Maguire is the man that can accommodate you!" he sneered.

"Thank you. I do not wish to abuse your liberality," Lloyd retorted. "What do you propose to do with us?"

"Hold you prisoners, just at present, until I form further plans of action. Where is Deadwood Dick?"

"Fortunately out of your reach. I hope where he can work against you."

"Bah! I'll have him ere long, rest assured, and then, having already secured Calamity Jane, the ringleaders of this outlaw band will be mine. Then I may make terms satisfactory to all. If not, I can make a spec by handing you all over to the law, which will summarily dispose of you in good shape."

"So you propose to be bought off, do you?" Lloyd demanded.

"You bet I do, if I can make a fortune by it!" Maguire confessed. "Besides, it shall be understood that I have the choice between this young woman and Calamity Jane for a wife."

"I guess you will fail, so far as I am concerned!" Kate Laurel cried, independently. "When I want to ally myself to a rattlesnake, I'll search through the hills for one that's possessed of a better nose than yours, or else no nose at all!"

Maguire fairly boiled with rage at this retort, and a string of violent curses escaped his lips.

"I'll soon show you who is boss!" he growled, savagely. "Ef I take a notion, I'll have the both of you!"

"You are blatant for a man of so little importance!" Lieutenant Lloyd interposed. "Just remember that Deadwood Dick owes you something in the way of a grudge, and if I am not mistaken, you'll need a shroud when he gets through with you."

"Bah! it will be him who will get the worst of it!" was the gruff reply. "Boys, remove this precious pair to the cabin, there, and see that they do not escape."

Although the party under Maguire had not fared so badly, the same could hardly be said of the men in the tree-tops.

Hardly had the party on the island commenced their assault, when one of the six guards in the trees was heard to go splashing down into the water from among the branches.

Not long afterward there was a yell, and a terrible thrashing among the branches, when splash went another body into the water.

The other guards became terrified, and kept a close watch upon the surroundings.

But to no avail.

Soon another man fell—then another, his yell being something horrible to hear.

In no case did those who dropped struggle long in the water. Silence almost immediately followed each fall.

And the battle was not yet over, in the valley, when the last of the six men whom Maguire had perched in the trees, went crashing down into the forest-covered lake.

In a little while, the figure of a man glided down one of the trees into a canoe upon the water, wherein sat—no one!

The man was Wild Walt, the Tiger!

When he discovered that the canoe was empty he uttered a curse, and peered about in the darkness, with a furious glitter in his eyes.

"She has fooled me, and escaped!" he growled, shutting his teeth together with a click. "But how, and where? I do not see how she could have escaped from this boat, without swimming!"

He saw something, a moment later, however, which caused him to blanch with terror, and set his teeth a chattering.

Not fifty yards away was dimly discernible some white, ghostly-shaped object, moving toward him, between the trees.

It needed no more than one glance to assure him that it was the same thing that he had seen more than once before—the apparition of Deadwood Dick, or the lively representative of that notability, whichever it might be; for the Tiger was hardly certain on the matter, although his eyes still reflected the discoloration caused by Deadwood Dick's fists.

Nearer and nearer, and Wild Walt glared at the seeming specter with a face nearly as white as that coming toward him.

Once he endeavored to raise his revolver, but a demoniac laugh from the approaching thing caused his hand to drop nerveless to his side.

Nearer—nearer came the canoe that bore the man or spirit of Deadwood Dick, until it was not two yards away from the spot where the Tiger's canoe was drifting.

Then the right hand left the paddle, to bring a shining revolver to a level with the Tiger's heart.

"Don't! don't shoot!" the latter gasped, his very soul filled with supreme terror, when he noted that a halo of light surrounded the specter. "I have been punished sufficiently for all wrong I have done to you."

"You have, eh?" came back in tones that sounded unearthly, to say the least. "That remains to be told. I saw my wife in your company not long ago. How was this?"

The braggart and coward felt just a trifle easier at this.

"I think you will do me justice in believing me, when I say I was with her for no other purpose than your mutual benefit!" he replied.

"Maguire, the deputy sheriff, imprisoned her, and set forth for this island to capture you also. I aided her to escape, and we both started to your rescue!"

"What about her not being with you now?"

"I do not know. I ascended into the tree-tops to see what was going on on the island, and was busy quite awhile a-knifing a parcel of Maguire's sentinels, whom he had there. I did this job for your sake, to help ye long. When I dropped back here, Calamity war gone, an' ye war comin'."

Deadwood Dick was silent for a few moments; then he threw off his ghostly garb of white and removed a white phosphorescent mask, at the same time pulling nearer.

"What you have told is true!" he said, his voice once more natural. "I know it, or else I should not believe it. It is probable that Calamity has swum to the path leading up the cliff, in order to reach Maguire."

"No! If anything, it is to meet you to seek a reconciliation?"

"You think so?"

"I know it. Why, didn't the gal tell me she saw ye and the Laurel gal a-makin' love the other night, and that she shouldn't give you up, for all that?"

"Perhaps I am wrong!" Deadwood Dick said, "but my Heavens, I believed her unfaithful, when I saw her crying before the rascal Maguire. But, let that drop. Do you hear the rifle reports on the island? There's trouble there!"

"Yes, and having made up my mind to live a better life, ef ye want me ter sail into the fight with ye jest say the word!" the Tiger said, with a good deal of vim.

"That is at your own option!" Dick replied.

"At any rate, it behooves us not to be too hasty in seeking the island. There may be a trap awaiting for whosoever climbs up the path. How many roughs did this Maguire bring with him?"

"Eighteen!"

"And you dispatched three of them?"

"No! six."

"Then there are twelve on the island. If I were there I'd clean them out in about no time, because I'd lead, and my twenty odd follow where I direct or go."

"Listen! the firing is slowing up! Some one is getting weak!" Wild Walt said.

"Should it be my men, we shall have something to do!" Dick returned. "I'll make it warm for this man, Maguire, should he be defeated."

He then listened, with glowing eyes, until the last shot was heard; then he turned to the Tiger, something terrible in his piercing glance:

"I am afraid my crowd is defeated! Come! let us make a move. Follow me, and mind!—I am putting confidence in you. If you betray it, I'll see that you never do so in another instance."

"Never fear!" the Tiger protested. "I am as solid to depend upon as the pilgrim rock!"

Deadwood Dick then propelled his canoe back in the direction whence he had come. In ten minutes they reached a little wooded island, and disembarked.

In a short while, Dick produced a number of disguises, and both he and the Tiger were so made up as to accurately resemble two of the party whom Maguire had brought to the island.

Entering the Tiger's canoe, then, Dick pulled back for the main island where was his rendezvous.

"We will now soon know the worst," Dick remarked, "and all I look for is the worst."

"We will hope for the best, at any rate!" the Tiger responded, with a meekness that seemed strange for one of his former character.

They were soon at the foot of the rugged path, where the rude canoes of Maguire's party were tied.

"We'll set them adrift, and see who wins!" Dick gritted.

The action followed the word, whereupon they secured their own canoe, and clambered up the bluff, eager to learn the results of the battle.

CHAPTER XVII.

TIME'S REVENGES—CONCLUSION.

JUST on top of the cliff they came face to face with Calamity Jane, who had evidently been peering down at them as they came up the path.

Dick turned away his gaze as the accusing glance of Calamity rested upon him, but only for an instant, when he re-assumed control of himself and faced her again.

"Well?" he said, interrogatively.

"Are you sure it is well?" she asked, sternly. "Are you sure it is well that we have met once more?"

"That depends somewhat on circumstances," was Dick's answer. "As far as I am concerned there is nothing wrong, and if you want an apology for my desertion, why, I freely make it, as I guess I was hasty in judging you wrong."

"Is that possible?" Calamity replied, with sarcasm. "You do really believe it is time for you to come to your senses, eh? Well, I am very much surprised indeed. I guess your absence from me did not give you much pain, however, as I see your gallantry with other women has been progressing finely toward a climax."

"If you refer to seeing me in company of Miss Laurel, allow me to state that we are no more than friends. We have met on two or three occasions, but that is as far as our acquaintance has gone."

"I did not see her kneeling before you, in a very loving fashion, a few nights since? Perhaps it was an optical illusion."

"You saw Miss Laurel kneeling before me, expressing her gratitude to me for saving her father's life the night he was decoyed on the lake and his life attempted. I happened along just in time to save his life and gold, and brought him to this island, where he has since been confined to a tent, from the effects of his wound, but is now recovering. But look, yonder cabin is afire, and it is as I feared! My men have been defeated by Maguire and his gang. See! the ground is strewn with dead and wounded! And there is Maguire now, looking at the burning cabin!"

The rain was subsiding to a drizzle, but the lightning flashed and the thunder crashed nearly as hard as ever.

Down in the basin was the cabin burning brightly, the timber being pretty dry and well seasoned.

"We had best lie flat!" Dick warned, "to avoid discovery!"

His advice was adopted, and all laid down in such a position that they could see without being seen.

"Possibly they have not all been killed, but have been imprisoned in the other cabin," Dick suggested. "Maguire will no doubt await there hoping that I will venture into his claws. But although I intend to venture down among them, they'll not know me. Before daylight I'll have a change made in affairs on this island, and if I mistake not, leave this part of the West for good."

"And leave your divide in the bottom of the lake?" Wild Walt queried, in surprise.

Dick laughed.

"Hardly!" he answered. "The sacks of gold that went down with my horse have long since been recovered. In the dead of night I have several times been lowered down, until, little by little, I have got the lost treasure and transferred it to a place of safety, far from here. All those who come to Doomsday to benefit by my loss will have the pleasure of searching the lake and having a picnic among the fish, but will find no gold."

The Tiger quietly winced a little at this, but no one noticed it.

Down in the basin, some of the Regulators were engaged in collecting the bodies together, and laying them out in a row.

Otherwise there was nothing particular going on—Maguire and the remainder of the men being engaged in watching the fire.

"Come!" Dick said. "I am almost certain that some of my boys are shut up, as well as Laurel. I will take you to a place from which we can escape, when I return; then I will go down into the basin in disguise, and see what remains to be seen."

"Oh! don't! You will be captured and put to death!" Calamity protested, laying her hand upon his arm and looking up into his face, piteously.

"Never fear, mine own!" he replied, bending nearer to her. "For your sake I will not be rash, but will come back, and we will go hence together. Come! crawl after me!"

He led the way, and they followed, worming along like snakes. In a short time they came to a crevice, or more appropriately a hole, in the rock, which seemed to extend downward far into the bowels of the cliff, near its outward edge.

A ladder of rope was fastened to a strong sapling at the edge of this hole and furnished a means of descending into it.

"There!" Dick announced. "You two can remain here. If danger approaches, you can descend into the pit and secrete yourselves, until I join you, which will be before daybreak. Keep your eyes and ears open, however, so as to avoid a surprise."

Then, after a few words, he crept down the sides of the basin, and was soon lost from view of Calamity and the Tiger.

Passing on Dick soon came to where an excavation had been made in the side of the basin, in quest of gold.

Cautiously entering this, he groped around and found a bundle of things, some of which he at once proceeded to don, and in a few minutes there emerged from the excavation Old Bum!

Rough, uncouth and possessed of the strange-hued beard was he, and not one out of a hundred would have suspected that beneath his queer exterior was the famous man of the mines, Deadwood Dick.

He walked boldly down the slope to the bottom of the basin, apparently without the least concern.

As soon as he drew near the burning building he doffed his hat and gave a hurrah that awoke the echoes.

"Kerwhoop! So ye've cleaned out the ranch, hes ye?" he cried, as he approached Maguire. "Thet's a good thing, by gum! Hed a curiosity ter see how ye war gettin' on, so I jest skated over. Didn't find Deadwood hisself, tho', did ye?"

"No!" Maguire growled. "It won't be long ere I trap him, however!"

"Kill 'em all!" Bum quizzed, staring grimly at the row of lifeless corpses.

"No; have reserved his right-hand man, also a wounded delegate named Laurel and his daughter, in the cabin yonder."

"Humph!" Bum grunted. "S'pose ye wouldn't mind ef ye knew whar Dicky and Calamity aire?"

"Do you know where they are?" Maguire queried, suspiciously.

"Waal, neow, that depends altergether whar they aire and how much ye want ter pay to know whar," Bum replied, with a queer grin, his false nose seeming to look more of a purple than ever.

"Oh! you want to speculate, do you? Well, let me tell you you won't get a cent out of me. What's more, you can remain right here in camp until I see fit to dispose of you. For instance, how would you like to roast in yonder fire?"

"Oh, heavings! I'd screech the top of the houses off!" Bum cried, quaking with apparent terror. "Don't say any more. I'll be as meek as a lamb, an' ef ye want me ter show ye whar Deadwood Dick is, I'll do et fer jest twenty shillin's cash. Then, while ye watch him, I'll come back an' get some o' yer fellers to help capture him an' his wife, Calamity Jane."

"Bah! Calamity is in jail!"

"You lie! The Tiger reskied her to-day! I follered, an' I can show ye jest whar all parties aire."

"I'll reflect!" the deputy said, turning away, while Bum sat down upon a rock to take a smoke from a clay pipe perhaps a century old.

After awhile Maguire came back to him, with an evil gleam in his eyes.

"See here! do you mean business?" he growled, savagely, "fer ef ye don't I'll fix ye so ye won't never try purty games again."

"I mean bizness—on course I do. That's what I cum hyar fer!" was the reply. "Why, cuss yer heart, I war a bizness man from babyhood, when I uster bite the nipples off'n bottles ter influence the trade."

"Your gab is too plentiful. If you want to earn fifty dollars, show me where Deadwood Dick is, and then come back after the boys, and when the devil is captured the money shall be yours!"

"Thank you! I don't propose to wait till the end of the world, not by er long shot, fer my pay, as the devil won't never git took in, till that time!"

"You are facetious, for a fool!" the deputy growled. "I mean Deadwood Dick, when I mention the devil, for he represents the Old Nick, here on earth, or else I've lost my reckoning."

"All right! I'm yer man! Come erlong!" Bum called out, with a nod. "I can't make my fortin' easier."

With which words he started off.

Maguire eyed him a moment, as if half suspicious, and then followed, beside him.

Passing the burning building Old Bum, as we shall still continue to call him, shaped his course toward the southern end of the island, where a chaparral grew in the bottom of the basin.

In ten minutes, they were within a little opening, surrounded by the chaparral.

Then, suddenly, Deadwood Dick turned upon the deputy, by a touch threw off his disguise, and, in the same movement produced two

swords and a revolver from beneath the disguise, the latter being leveled upon the deputy.

Maguire shrunk back with a gasp, when he saw how he had been tricked, and probably would have yelled for assistance, but for the motion of the pistol which warned him to desist.

"If you make an outcry, you die!" Dick exclaimed, sternly; "you are a black-hearted scoundrel—a dirty villain—and you shall answer for the injury you have done me, and my true wife. There is a sword, sir"—and he threw the weapon on the ground, in front of Maguire. "It is either you or I, now. Pick up your weapon and meet me like a man, if, indeed, there is a speck of manhood in you."

A flush of rage suffused Maguire's face, and an evil gleam of hatred entered his eyes.

He picked up the sword, and the men faced each other, with weapons seized in a firm grasp.

Then came thrust and parry—and a low groan.

Maguire dropped dead.

The point of his sword had caught in Deadwood Dick's hilt, and breaking off, was buried back in such a manner that the point of it was buried in the deputy's left eye, and penetrating to the brain, produced almost instant death.

Kneeling beside the ruffian for a few moments, Deadwood Dick ransacked his pockets of his papers, then, redoffing his disguise as Old Bum, he ran back to the camp in the heart of the basin.

"Quick! quick!" he shouted. "Go to the assistance of Maguire. I will look to the prisoners!"

Every man went, and—

Three days later a happy party were camping fifty miles to the westward, engaged, 'neath the shadows of a forest and within the light of a roaring bonfire, in counting and weighing golden treasure.

There was an expression of content on each face.

The party consisted of Deadwood Dick and Calamity Jane, Kate Laurel and Lieutenant Lloyd, Mr. and Mrs. Laurel.

While the Tiger sat near at hand, smoking and evidently somewhat tamed.

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